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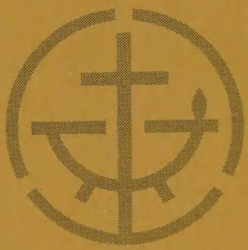
MODERN EVANGELISTIC ADDRESS

Edited by

D. P. THOMSON, M.A.



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Handbooks of Modern Evangelism

THE MODERN EVANGELISTIC ADDRESS

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THE MODERN EVANGELISTIC ADDRESS

EDITED BY

D. P. THOMSON, M.A.

Editor of "Winning the Children for Christ," "Evangelism in the Modern World," "Twenty Sermons by Famous Scotch Preachers," "The Scottish Pulpit," etc.

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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25-3237

THE MODERN EVANGELISTIC ADDRESS
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

THIS is the fourth volume of a short series of Handbooks of Modern Evangelism, designed to discuss present-day needs and problems in the light of the most competent scholarship and the widest practical experience. There is no problem more urgent or more important than that of the adequate presentation of the evangelistic message to the men and women of our day, and few are better qualified to discuss it than the contributors to this volume. They are themselves evangelists, whose ministry has been tested in many a field, and whose consecrated talent has been greatly used in the winning of men and women for Christ.

The present volume will be followed by one on *Present-day Methods in Evangelism.* Others on *The Psychology of Evangelism* and *The Ministry of Personal Dealing* are in course of preparation, and it is hoped to include in the series volumes on *The Psychology of Conversion* and *The Psychology of Religious Revival.*

In planning the series the Editors have sought to allow for the utmost catholicity of outlook and variety of treatment consistent with the unity and scope of the subject, and here, as elsewhere, will be found contributions by men of widely different schools of thought. Each writer has been left entirely free to choose his own subject, but

all have been asked to contribute an Introductory Note, indicating where necessary the type of audience addressed, the occasion on which the message was delivered, and the nature of the appeal made. It was felt that this would add greatly to the interest and value of the book.

To all who have helped in the preparation of this volume, and particularly to fellow-members of the Glasgow Students' Evangelistic Union, who have so generously co-operated in this as in earlier books, we would express our indebtedness and gratitude.

D. P. T.

Glasgow.

INTRODUCTION

The primacy of Evangelism in the work and ministry of the Church is conceded to-day by all thoughtful men, and one can hardly see how it could be otherwise. It must surely be clear to even the least observant that no lasting superstructure can be reared unless a foundation has first been truly and securely laid, that no discipline and training in Christian character and service can be given until the work of recruiting men and women for the Kingdom of God has been done, that no far-reaching Christian educational programme can be launched with any hope of success except it be evangelistic at once in aim and in spirit. Evangelism may be only the beginning of the Church's task, but it is the beginning, and no other ministry, however rich in intellectual culture or æsthetic appeal, can ever take its place.

Evangelism has been defined as the winning of men and women for Jesus Christ, with all that that means in the reshaping of outlook and character—in the transformation of life, the liberation of unsuspected energies and powers, the regrouping of all the attributes of personality round a new and distinctive centre, and the direction of the life towards a clear and definite goal, at once individual and social. Evangelism not unnaturally takes many different forms, and their

number and variety are more likely to increase than to diminish. There is the evangelism of the printed page as well as the evangelism of the spoken word, and it is hard to say which is the more effective to-day. There is the evangelism of unconscious influence, exercised by a multitude of godly men and women the world over, all down the course of Christian history, and there is the evangelism of picture and symbol, of pageant and drama—mediated through the genius of the artist or made effective by the consecrated talent of the performer. There is the oldest and perhaps the most powerful of all forms of evangelism—personal work, the moving testimony and appeal of the man or woman whose life has been changed by the power of God, and whose new-found joy in Christ is so great that friend and neighbour must hear of it, and, if possible, be led to share the experience. With some, at least, of these many and varied forms of evangelism we hope to deal later;* here we are concerned primarily with the evangelistic address as delivered from pulpit or platform.

What, exactly, do we mean by an evangelistic sermon or address? What are its distinguishing marks? Wherein does it differ materially from any and every other form of religious discourse? The evangelistic address is not simply an exposition of evangelical truth, however lucid, convincing or forceful, nor is it merely a plea, however eloquent and timely, for the acceptance of the Christian ideal and the application of the mind and teaching of Christ to the whole round of human life and duty. These things will be in-

* *Present-day Methods in Evangelism*, 1925.

volved, but of themselves they are not sufficient. The verdict for which the evangelist pleads is the surrendered and dedicated life, and his message is at once an affirmation and an appeal. It is addressed to all those who, whatever their sympathy or their standing, have never come into definite, personal relationship with Christ—whose lives have not yet centred in Him, and whose wills have not yet been yielded to Him. It is an affirmation concerning all that is central in the work of Christ *for* men and *in* men and all that is fundamental in that transforming experience to which the exercise of personal faith in Christ gives rise. It is an appeal for personal decision, personal surrender and personal acceptance of that which God offers to men in Christ. It is an appeal for such a decision as will involve the whole man—thought, will and affection; as will change the whole contour and tenor of life; and, above all, as will make the presence and power of Christ a reality in personal experience. In the ideal evangelistic address affirmation and appeal so blend with one another—so completely merge—that the message becomes one harmonious whole in which the distinctive elements have almost disappeared.

It will be noticed that this book is entitled "The *Modern* Evangelistic Address," and it may seem to the reader that some justification is required for the use of a term which has been the subject of so much controversy and round which such unfortunate associations have gathered. All that the Editor wishes to emphasise is the fact that the evangelistic address with which we are here concerned is one adapted to modern require-

ments, clothed in the language and thought of the twentieth century, couched in terms of common speech, availing itself of contemporary categories and implicit with the recognition of present needs and problems, intellectual and social. While the heart of the evangelistic message remains the same from age to age, the form of its expression is continually changing, and no address that fails to satisfy these canons can hope to awaken responsive chords in the hearts and minds of men and women who are in touch with the spirit and outlook of their own generation.

It remains to be added, before going on to discuss the subject in greater detail, that while most of what is said in these pages will have a more general application, it is with a particular type of evangelistic address that we are primarily concerned here. It is the evangelistic sermon or address delivered at an indoor religious service or meeting of which we are thinking and writing. There are many other quite distinctive types of evangelistic message, such as the Open-Air Address, but these will be dealt with elsewhere.*

* * * * *

The Evangelistic Address demands quite as much thought and preparation as any other type of message. In the last analysis it will always be judged by its content and not by its climax. It must convince the mind and satisfy the intellect as well as quicken the conscience and stir the heart. Its affirmations must be reasonable—and, in some cases, even closely reasoned—if its appeal is to have real force or value. The truths of

* *Present-day Methods in Evangelism*, 1925.

revelation and experience on which it is based must be capable of lucid and convincing exposition—and of explicit co-ordination with the whole body of Christian belief on the one hand, and practical application to the details of everyday life on the other. While it is not the business of the evangelist to edify and instruct so much as to arrest, to challenge and to capture, he can never afford to neglect the doctrinal and theological background of his message. It is of first importance not only to himself and to his immediate hearers, but to the Church he represents, and in whose name he speaks.

It is obviously impossible within the scope of this brief Introduction to deal with the substance of the evangelistic message in any detail, but it is necessary to mention some of the facts of revelation and experience with which that message must concern itself.

There is, first of all, the fact of Revelation itself—with its anterior postulate of a personal God in and behind the evident purposiveness of this universe in which we find ourselves. The evangelist has no message to declare except he take his stand on the fact that God is, and that He has in varying ways, and at different times, revealed Himself to men—and revealed not only Himself, but His purpose and plan for humanity, His standards of value and ideals for human life that His supreme revelation to men has been given in the Person and Work of His Son Jesus Christ, and that within the covers of the Bible there are treasured for us authentic records of that revelation and of the experience to which it gave rise.

Allied to the fact of revelation, there is the reality of moral responsibility, and arising out of these the fact of sin, individual and social. Only on the assumption that man is not merely a self-conscious but a self-determining being, with real, although perhaps definitely restricted and conditioned liberty of choice, can the evangelist have any message at all, and once that postulate be granted the fact of sin becomes self-evident in the light of convenience itself, not to speak of revelation. For the evangelist the fact of sin is fundamental and he must not only accept it, but preach it—its reality, its guilt, its stain and its power. The evangelistic address that takes no cognisance of the fact of sin will give no evidence of the power to save.

The evangelist further takes his stand in the reality and validity—and we might add, on the variety—of religious experience. Unless that be granted he is less than a voice crying in the wilderness—he is the mere echo of an illusion whose unreality robs it of all beneficent activity and stamps it, in the light of the claims made for it, as not merely powerless to affect human life for good, but positively baneful in its results. With that ground beneath his feet—and the soundest psychology would hesitate to rob him of it—the evangelist goes on to claim—and makes it his business to *proclaim*—the fact of forgiveness, and the fact of deliverance. Convinced by the evidence of his senses—and made more conscious every day by the discoveries of those who are engaged in practical and scientific research—that the stain of sin, the bitter entail of disobedience, has ineradicable elements and irredeemable

issues, he becomes the more clear that unless he has a gospel of forgiveness and a gospel of deliverance to declare, he has little indeed to offer to the victims of failure and folly, the disillusioned and the disappointed, the wayfarer and the wanderer.

But his Gospel has richer and fuller elements even than that—it is his joy to tell men of a Saviour who not merely delivers and pardons, but who empowers for conflict and for service, who quickens dormant energies, liberates unsuspected powers, sanctifies and redirects prostituted passions, and co-ordinates the whole personality bringing mind, heart and body into happy harmony, and making fellowship with God a reality, and service for man at once a privilege and a delight. It is his business to summon men to the service of an ideal that finds concrete expression in Christ's great conception of a Kingdom of God, where the Father's Will is done on earth as in heaven, and practical application in a hundred directions in the ordinary activities of every man's life. It is his right to make the invitation of Christ to the weary and heavy-laden, the downtrodden and the disappointed, as winsome and tender as possible; and the challenge of Christ to the freshness and vigour of youth, the virility of manhood, and the grace and beauty of womanhood as insistent and imperative as he can. Can any one doubt that we who are called to preach Christ to men, have a Gospel big enough for all the needs of our modern world, and big enough to command the exercise of all our powers? Can any question the fact that evangelistic preaching has a right to demand

the disciplined intellect as well as the burning heart?

If the evangelist is expected to examine the doctrinal and theological bans of his message, and to find the substance of his Gospel in the sum of verifiable truth, revealed and experimental, it is equally certain that he is called to a frank recognition of the currents, tendencies and needs of his own day, and to such readjustment of his thought as these may demand. His knowledge of contemporary life and thought will inevitably sharpen his perspective and colour the presentation of his message. The deeper his spiritual insight, the greater his familiarity with the common work and ways of men, the keener his appreciation of forces that are vital and operative in the shaping of public opinion and the moulding of common thought and standards of life, the more effective will his message be and the readier and more responsive hearing will it gain. If the Christian religion must be rethought in the study, not less must the points of contact with the world to which it is to be mediated be sought in the street.

The evangelist who confronts the problems of his own day, and endeavours to discover the characteristic outlook of contemporary life will be forced to the conclusion that the danger of an extreme individualism has given place to the danger of an extreme collectivism and that the subjective elements in religious experience have been so ignored as to leave an altogether insufficient basis for those manifold objective energies to which an awakened social conscience is calling the followers of Christ. As the significance of

the situation dawns upon him he will find himself heartily endorsing Dr. Fosdick's dictum that "Our modern Christianity, instead of being an endeavour after the pure heart that sees God, has become largely a Gospel of 'wake up and get to work,' which is doubtless a needed emphasis, but which alone is pitifully inadequate." He will begin to wonder whether a gospel of deliverance that is "not so much from sin's consequences or power as out of a life of loneliness and from a use of the world that ministered to mere pride and selfishness into a life of social service and a use of the world ministering to the satisfaction of every hunger of an awakened personality" is really altogether adequate. He will find himself wondering whether men are not making the forgiveness of God too cheap, and forgetting that moral decision is not enough. He will feel the urge to remind them that pardon is, after all, the most fundamental need of the human soul, and that there is more than an element of truth in the assertion that "only the forgiven can really love."

Above all the evangelist will discover, when he gets below the surface, that the problems of his time are like the problems of other times, less intellectual than moral, and that the very insistence on the distinctively social elements and implications of the Gospel may prove a means of creating—and may be used by him to create—such a real consciousness of personal unfitness as to deserve the name of conviction of sin. If the characteristic longing of to-day is not so much *to be good* as *to make good*, the sense of need and the consciousness of failure are there, and

Sermon "Being Good & Making Good"

the man who does not realise this is not only missing his great opportunity, but leaving disappointed and unsatisfied hearts and sadly disorganised lives behind him.

If the modern youth is little concerned with the saving of his soul, and the assurance of his restoration to the favour of God, he is very much concerned about the winning of his moral conflict, the harnessing of the "cave-man" within him and the organising of his life round a worthy centre. He is not deaf to the call to service, nor dead to the throb of pity as he looks out on a world of need. On the contrary, he is conscious of a great desire to help, capable even of a willingness to give the utmost for the highest, but painfully aware that he has little or nothing to give until his own moral problem is solved, his own life redeemed and his own victory won. That is what so many who have swung away from the older evangelism seem to forget. At times it may have been unhealthily morbid, but it was at least frank enough to recognise that a man's first problem is himself. Perhaps we all need to be reminded of that, despite even our willingness to admit that "the modern message needs a sharper evangelistic edge."

One or two other remarks fall to be made here, regarding the content and delivery of the evangelistic address if this Introduction is to serve its purpose.

As already emphasised, the evangelistic message, to be dynamically effective, must succeed in relating itself to the daily life of the average man. It must show how Christianity becomes operative in home and business life, in recrea-

tional and intellectual activity, aiding in the solution of every problem, helping to adjust every relationship, filling life with higher meaning and investing even the common round and the monotonous task with a new and wonderful significance. It must contain a challenge big enough to lift men out of themselves to larger and ampler horizons, to more generous and worthy enthusiasms, to better and bigger investments of personality. It must have something to offer the daring and adventurous spirit of youth, and something to engage the disciplined intellect and developed powers of maturer years. Above all it must emphasise the fact that Christ came—and comes to-day—not simply to meet the deepest needs and satisfy the greatest longings of the human heart, but to liberate the dormant energies of life, quicken the whole intellectual, moral and spiritual fibre as well as the physical frame, and harness every power of mind and body to the great enterprise of the Kingdom.

The teaching element must not be allowed to obtrude itself in the evangelistic address. The evangelist is an advocate, a pleader, a champion, and as such his task is rather to convince the reason, move the feelings and persuade the will, than to educate the mind or edify the heart. It is best that he should play the part of expositor or instructor as little as possible, rather basing his appeal on teaching that may be presumed to have been given in the past and addressing himself to convictions likely to be not only present in his hearer's minds, but deeply seated in their consciousness. If he has thus succeeded in making contact with ideals fully accepted, standards al-

ready recognised, conditions unhappily present, and possibilities admittedly real, he will be able to say with convincing power, "*You know that it is so. . . . You know that He will. . . . You know that you ought.*" The whole art of the evangelistic address consists in getting one or two burning truths well home to heart and mind and conscience, in making abundantly clear their issues for life and service and in pressing for the immediate action they demand.

It is just here that so many otherwise admirable addresses fail of evangelistic effectiveness. They are carefully constructed, fully illustrated, brilliantly reasoned and forcibly delivered, but they are too far-reaching in their scope and too all-embracing in their sweep. They delight, they stimulate, they inspire, but they lack the power and drive of the concentrated mass attack that carries the citadel of the soul. To vary the figure: it is possible to carry mind and heart on so long a journey that the necessary freshness and vigour needed for the great adventure are lacking when the climax is reached. Again it is possible to make the background of your address so rich and full that its central message will not stand out sufficiently clear and luminous. We seem to remember having read of a celebrated painter who sketched in the thorns in Christ's crown with such effect as to obscure the appeal on the face of the Crucified. It is an old truism that the artist who crowds his canvas will fail to achieve his impression.

It follows from what has been said that the evangelistic address should lead to one appeal and one alone—the appeal for immediate, abso-

lute, whole-heartedly and rationally considered decision for Christ—for acceptance of His promised power, His way of life and His call to service. Subsidiary appeals of one kind and another may be thought to have their place, but the danger is that they may tend to obscure the issue and divert the mind from the great question of personal decision for Christ.

The ideal evangelistic address will be marked by many other characteristics. It will be fearlessly direct and challenging, instinct with personal experience, aglow with consecrated passion and athrob with the note of urgency. It will be as uncompromisingly direct and straightforward as it is lucid and convincing. That address will get nowhere which clothes itself in the language of vague generalities. The speaker must be able to say, with a certainty and conviction born of the consciousness that his message and his opportunity are alike God-given—*"Thou art the man!"* And the man whose whole tone and manner suggest to his hearers that he has faced their temptations, confronted their problems, and is day by day fighting their fight—succeeding only because the strength of Christ is his—will immediately awaken a responsive chord in their hearts. The man whose earnestness and enthusiasm are the more obvious because of the restraint he is exercising, and whose urgency invests the closing moments of the appeal with a feeling of golden opportunity and fateful responsibility, will gain enormously in power. These things are only attained where to the discipline of the study and the direct touch with life's every day in the home and in the street there is added a spiritual inten-

sity fed at the inner sanctuary where a man meets his God alone face to face. That man will preach with greatest power who brings his gifts fresh to the altar before he goes to the platform or the pulpit.

It remains to be added that the examples given in this book are not to be taken as models of what the Evangelistic Address should be. They are here as representing the efforts of men who, week by week, are striving to make their Gospel articulate and evangelistically effective, and whose labours have not been without real and definite fruit.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS . . . W. Hay Aitken, M.A., Canon of Norwich Cathedral.	25
II	THE GOLDEN HOUR OF LIFE . . . A. D. Belden, B.D., Crowstone Congregational Church, Westcliffe-on-Sea.	38
III	DOING DOES IT . . . . . . W. Kaye Dunn, B.A., Special Missioner, New Barnet.	52
IV	PRESENTING THE GOOD NEWS . . . Lionel B. Fletcher, Beresford Street Congregational Church, Auckland, New Zealand.	64
V	PROCRASTINATION . . . . . . Harry Emerson Fosdick, D.D., Union Theological Seminary, New York.	78
VI	DO WE REALLY NEED RELIGION? . A. Herbert Gray, D.D., Student Christian Movement.	94
VII	HOW CHRIST CAN ENRICH YOUR LIFE . . . . . . J. Chalmers Lyon, Hampstead Presbyterian Church, London.	108
VIII	THE LOVE THAT RESTORES . . . D. C. Mitchell, M.A., North United Free Church, Aberdeen.	125

CHAPTER PAGE

IX A CHALLENGE TO INDECISION . . 137
W. Graham Scroggie, Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh.

X THE QUENCHING QUESTION . . 150
Hubert L. Simpson, M.A., United Free Church of Scotland.

XI NEW WORLDS FOR OLD . . . 165
J. Sommerville Smith, M.A., North Woodside United Free Church, Glasgow.

XII THE KINGHOOD OF JESUS . . . 177
Tom Sykes, Special Missioner of the English National Free Church Council.

XIII THE THRESHOLD OF THE KINGDOM 185
D. P. Thompson, M.A., Organising Secretary of the Glasgow Students' Evangelistic Union.

XIV THE NATURALNESS OF RELIGION . 199
J. J. Virgo, C.B.E., National Field Secretary of the English Y.M.C.A.

XV THE GREAT REFUSAL 208
C. Ensor Walters, Secretary of the London Wesleyan Methodist Mission.

THE MODERN EVANGELISTIC ADDRESS

Chapter I

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

By

W. HAY AITKEN, M.A.

INTRODUCTION

I have chosen for my contribution to this volume the great central doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, just because it seems to me that it is *central*, all else in Mission preaching leads up to this, or flows from it as a natural sequel. The acceptance of this specific spiritual benefit marks the true turning-point in the experience of the human spirit, and is the criterion of genuine success in the Mission preacher's work. There is perhaps a tendency in the present day to put moral decision in the foremost place, as the thing above all else to be aimed at; but while it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this, and, indeed, we can reach no semblance of success without it, yet this is rather the condition precedent of a true conversion than the conversion itself. If the awakened soul gets no further than the making of a solemn decision to forsake sin and yield himself to God, he is, indeed, repentant, but can it be said that he is a new creature, that old things have passed away, and all things become new? His decision is good and right, as far as it goes;

but surely however honest and genuine in itself, it needs to be reinforced by the entrance of a new spiritual force, the dynamic of distinctively Christian experience; and it is when pardon has been claimed through the vision of the Cross, that, all barriers being removed between the soul and God, the new life—the resurrection life flows into the soul, and renders it capable of living out the decision at which the will has already arrived. Here, too, we find the spring of that grateful love, which is so prominent a feature of all true Christian experience. We love much because we have had much forgiven, and all the more because that forgiveness has reached us through the triumph of Divine Love in the Cross. It is only the forgiven soul that can live out St. John's doxology, "Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets: 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish.'"—Acts xiii. 38-41.

I BELIEVE in the forgiveness of sins. How can I do anything else with such an explicit statement as this before my eyes? Because I am a Christian I must needs believe in the forgiveness

of sins, inasmuch as this doctrine is the very essence of the Gospel, and in order to doubt it I should have to turn my back upon the most emphatic teaching of the New Testament Scriptures. Nay! worse than this, I should have to disown the primary object of our blessed Lord's Incarnation and atoning death, and no longer to regard Him as "a Prince and a Saviour," exalted by the Father to give repentance and the remission of sins.

And, may I say, because I am a Churchman, I believe in the forgiveness of sins; for I cannot join in the daily offices of our Church, without repeating this confession in the Creed. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that Christians belonging to other denominations believe in this doctrine any less earnestly than we do; but I want to remind my fellow Church-folk that our Church speaks with no uncertain voice on this subject, but demands it of us in our confession of faith addressed to Almighty God, that we should confidently affirm "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

And because I am a man—a poor, frail, sinful man, I believe in the forgiveness of sins, for were I to abandon this faith, I should find nothing between me and despair. If there be no such thing as forgiveness, what hope can there be for any one of us? Our own hearts tell us that the Apostle is right when he affirms that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." How then can we hope to be accepted by the God whom we have sinned against, and failed to glorify, unless His grace has made some adequate provision for the forgiveness of our sins?

Yet although all this seems so clear and obvious, that one would think there could be no question about it, it is surprising how vague the ideas of some, who would profess and call themselves Christians, are upon this subject. I well remember a dear friend of mine, who was a very earnest evangelist, describing to me a conversation that he had with a lady of this class upon the point. He had been pressing upon her the Gospel of forgiveness, when she almost petulantly replied, "I don't believe that we can have our sins forgiven us in this world." "Oh!" replied my friend, "is that so? Then I suppose that you are a Roman Catholic, and believe in Purgatory?" "Indeed," she replied, not without some show of indignation, "I am nothing of the kind, and I don't believe in Purgatory." "Well, then, my dear lady, will you tell me when and where our sins are to be forgiven? If there is no such thing as Purgatory, they cannot be forgiven there; and it is obvious that they cannot be forgiven on the Day of Judgment, for that will be the time for judging them, and not the time for forgiving them; and you cannot take them with you to Heaven; for there is no sin there. Will you tell me then when and where they are to be forgiven?" The good lady looked very embarrassed, and after a moment's silence replied frankly enough, "Well, I never thought of that!" But she went up to her bedroom that night thinking of nothing else. "Surely the man is right; they cannot be forgiven in Purgatory, for I don't believe that there is such a place; nor can they be forgiven on the Day of Judgment, for that is the time when they will be judged.

Oh, my God, if they are ever to be forgiven at all, I see that it must be now. Then, oh, my God, forgive them now!" So she flung herself on her knees by her bedside and sought for present pardon until she had found it. And when she met my friend the next day, she was able to tell him, with a bright face and a joyous heart, that she knew now that "the Son of Man hath power *on earth* to forgive sins."

Perhaps there are few that would commit themselves to so rash and ill-considered an assertion as that lady made; but there are many others whose views and theories on the subject of the forgiveness of sins are just as faulty and misleading as were hers, though they take a different form from hers. There are two forms of error, lying in opposite directions, that the seeker after forgiveness needs to be warned against—the one has to do with practical experience and the other to a large extent with theories. The first is the mistake of the man, who, when he is awakened to a consciousness of sin, and realises his own guilt and danger, allows himself to feel almost as if he were endeavouring to extort a pardon from a reluctant God. With fervent entreaty and agonising supplication, he pleads for a pardon, which he knows that he does not deserve, and for a salvation which he has no right to hope for, as though he had to move the heart of God by his prayers, and induce Him to adopt an attitude of reconciliation and forgiveness.

But he who thus draws near to the Mercy-seat is the victim of a defective and misleading conception of God, and of the relation in which He stands to us, through the redemption that His

love has provided in Christ. God does not need to be moved to adopt an attitude of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He on His side is reconciled already. In accepting the atoning work of His Blessed Son on our behalf, it is not too much to say that God has adopted an attitude of forgiveness to all the world. It would, therefore, be true to say that God on His side has forgiven the whole world, and yet it would not be true to say that the whole world is forgiven.

Here lies the second and theoretic error of which I spoke a moment ago. It is not an uncommon thing to hear it affirmed that because God has revealed His forgiving love towards all mankind, therefore, all mankind are already forgiven, although they may not know it. It is, therefore, the function of the Evangelist, according to these teachers, to let people know that they are forgiven, and, by insistence on this fact, to endeavour to lead them into a higher and worthier life.

But those who accept this theory need to be reminded that there are two parties to an act of forgiveness, if that act is to be complete. There is, on the one hand, the person who forgives, and, on the other, the persons who accept the forgiveness. Where a reconciliation is dependent upon an act of forgiveness, both these elements must needs be present: there must be a readiness on the side of the party that has been wronged to forgive, and an equal readiness on the side of the party that has done the wrong to accept the forgiveness, and that on whatever terms the other

may prescribe; or else there can be no reconciliation.

Even so God may be ready to forgive, nay, rather He may actually have forgiven the whole world by providing a full and free pardon in Christ for all; yet if man will not accept that pardon on God's own terms, it cannot be true to say that he is already pardoned.

Let us find an illustration of the point in our own "island story." Some of our elder friends in this congregation can recall, as I can myself, the horrors of the Indian Mutiny. When that tragic struggle was drawing to its close, but before the fighting had altogether ceased, Queen Victoria was advised by her ministers to publish a "Deed of Amnesty," as it was called, addressed to all the Mutineers of India—that is, a deed that conveyed her full and free forgiveness of all who had taken part in the mutiny, with the exception of Nana Sahib, and one or two other arch-criminals. The ink was no sooner dry on that parchment, signed by our Queen, than her pardon of her rebel subjects was a settled fact. Hence it would no longer have been necessary, had it been possible, for any one involved in that rebellion, but anxious to escape the consequences, to make his way into the Queen's presence, and, falling at her feet, with tears and supplications to implore her mercy. Surely the Queen's answer would have had to be—"My Amnesty has been already granted; my word has been pledged, and, therefore, your personal appeal to my womanly compassion is little short of an insult, implying, as it does, a doubt of my pledged word."

This may serve to illustrate the first of the

two errors that I have been endeavouring to expose—the mistake of the man who, in seeking for forgiveness, feels and acts as if he had to move the heart of God to an act of forgiveness, when that act has already taken place.

But it is with the second of these two errors that we are now concerned, and we shall find an illustration of it in the further consideration of this historical event. Let us suppose ourselves to be in India at the time of the proclamation of the "Deed of Amnesty," and that we are allowed to accompany the representatives of our forces in an attempt to make it known to the rebels. We approach a stockade held in force by the enemy. A flag of truce is waved and the commander of the Mutineers presents himself for a parley. We tell him of the good news that the great Queen has granted a free pardon to him and his. We tell him that he has but to accept the Queen's pardon and go forth a free man. But the infatuated rebel treats our offer with scorn. "So long as there is breath in my body or blood in my veins," he cries, "I am the sworn enemy of you and your Queen. I'll have none of her pardons. I fight out this battle to the end, whether that end be victory or death." Our friendly counsel and remonstrances are fruitless, and we have to withdraw, and leave that rebel to his fate; and the very next day the stockade is stormed, and its rebel garrison slain to a man, and that with all the less compunction just because they had had the offer of the Queen's pardon and rejected it.

Now surely it would be ridiculous to say that these men were pardoned, and yet it would be

quite true to say that the Queen had pardoned them; but her pardon, instead of doing them any good, rendered her representatives all the more relentless; and we may truly say that the Queen's pardon rejected sealed their doom.

But let us pursue our journey of mercy. We approach another stronghold and again we sound a parley. This time we are met by a man who knows full well that his cause is lost; and who sees nothing before him but certain death. To him the Queen's proclamation comes as glad, good news. As the nature of the document is explained to him, we see his face lit up with a smile of joy and relief. He grasps the hand of the officer, and in another moment gives the order to his men to lay down their arms. Nothing remains now but to claim and receive the printed forms that carry with them the assurance of pardon and safety, and now not only has the Queen pardoned these rebels, but they themselves are actually pardoned, and no British officer could order any one of them to execution, whatever he might know of his special guilt, amidst the horrors of the mutiny. Here was no room for uncertainty; it was not a case of trusting or hoping for a pardon that might or might not be conceded. The act of pardon was already an accomplished fact, and now that the conditions attached to that act of pardon were complied with its application to the individual offender was no doubtful issue.

And what were those conditions? Just those that were obviously necessary in the nature of things. The Mutineer who desired pardon had to give up his rebellion, lay down his arms and

make his submission, and having done so to throw himself on the Queen's grace and *claim his pardon*. That was all. Surely it is on the same terms that the Gospel pardon is freely offered to all, for what have we here but repentance and faith, that "repentance whereby," as the Catechism puts it, "we forsake sin," and that "faith whereby we steadfastly believe the promises of God," and claim their fulfilment.

"Be it known unto you therefore, Brethren, that through this Man is proclaimed unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Thank God for that twice-repeated word, "ALL, ALL that believe." If I knew that there was a poor degraded drunkard in this gathering whose life has been blighted, his home destroyed and his children beggared by his cruel selfish vice, I would still say to him, "Brother, in spite of the loathsome sin that has spoilt your life, you are included in that 'ALL.'" If I knew that there was a poor fallen outcast before me now, from whom all the true grace and comeliness of womanhood has fled, to her I would like to say, "My child, my poor lost child, a world that is none too pure itself may turn its back upon you, and pass you by with haughty scorn, but Jesus never turned His back upon a repentant sinner yet; you, too, are included in this 'ALL.'"

"Justified from *all* things." To how many does this seem too good news to be true; but it is true. I remember a man long years ago describing to me how he went home from the Mission service in an agony of conviction. Sleep

was out of the question, and as he lay before God pouring out his confessions, it seemed as if all the many sins of his life were passing in review before his mind's eye. "They were black enough and numerous enough, yet it seemed to me," said he, "as I reflected, that for most of them there might be forgiveness; they were just such sins as probably many other sinners were guilty of, and, if they could be forgiven, why should not I? But there were some particularly dark stains in the record of my past life, and as I recalled them I felt sunk in despair. How was it possible that they could ever be forgiven? My heart sank within me at the thought of them, and for a long time I continued in a state bordering on despair. And then there stole into my mind the memory of a dear old familiar text, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from ALL sin'; and I left the whole lot—great and small—inside that wonderful word, 'ALL.'"

Beware, therefore, Brethren, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" What! *"Perish"* in spite of that wondrous "Deed of Amnesty" proclaimed from the blood-stained Cross. Nay, rather just because of that amazing provision of Divine love. Surely that must be the explanation of that terrible word, "THEREFORE." You remember how in our illustration the Mutineers who rejected the Queen's offer were all the more mercilessly dealt with, just because they had received that offer, and rejected it. And if, to use the Apostle's words in this passage, we put the offer from us, and "judge

ourselves unworthy of eternal life," what is there left for us but that terrible word *"perish."*

Right across the broad road that leads to destruction a kindly Providence has, as it would seem to me, erected a notice of warning in that solemn word, BEWARE! BEWARE! BEWARE!; and when we ask what the danger is, we find ourselves warned not against some grave and shameful breach of the moral law; not against murder or adultery or theft; but against a much more common sin than any of these—the sin of despising proffered mercy and refusing to accept the pardon which is already secured. There might have been some sort of excuse for the sinner, considering his human frailty and liability to be overcome by hostile influences, if no such gracious provision of Divine love had been made. But the provision has been made, and we despise it when we do not accept it. God save us from this sin of sins!

But if your hearts tell you that you have been guilty of this sin all through your past life, and are guilty of it still, why persist in this guilt? "Why will ye die, O House of Israel!" Why perish within sight of mercy? God's great "Deed of Amnesty" is set forth before your eyes in a crucified Saviour, it is proclaimed to a guilty world from yonder blood-stained Cross. On His side the forgiveness is already complete. Why not lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and make a full surrender of yourself to Divine Love, and claim the pardon that is already yours? This is no doubtful matter; it is not an open question whether God will or will not pardon you.

He Himself, in His infinite love, has provided the atonement; and He would be dishonouring the work and person of His Son if He did anything else but pardon you. "By Him all that believe are justified from all things." Take these words home as God's message to your weary sin-sick heart, and dare to sing:—

"O Love, Thou fathomless abyss!
My sins are swallowed up in Thee:
Covered is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains on me;
While Jesus' blood through earth and skies
Mercy—free, boundless mercy—cries."

Chapter II

THE GOLDEN HOUR OF LIFE

By

ALBERT D. BELDEN, B.D.

INTRODUCTION

This sermon represents an attempt to preach the Evangel to modern youth as *positively* as possible.

There is strong reaction in the mind to-day against three common features of past evangelism—(1) Its negative character. (2) Its appeal to fear and self-interest. (3) Its unrelatedness to the rest of knowledge.

I

It can scarcely be denied that in much popular evangelism of the past so much stress was laid on the young disciple's severance from the world that discipleship seemed to become a programme of "Don'ts." "Don't drink, don't swear, don't bet, don't go to the theatre, don't smoke." The "world" was identified too crudely with the pleasures of society and insufficiently with the temper and principle of society's everyday serious activities. This type of appeal to a youth nurtured in the atmosphere of the Great War is scarcely heroic enough. It smacks of the prig and does

not raise a big enough issue with the world. Actually and not subconsciously modern youth is already too Christianised for such an appeal. It seeks rather the one great positive Act of the Soul which, by choice of the Principle and Spirit of Jesus, will put these minor matters of conduct right in its course.

II

The sense of spiritual autonomy in the mind of to-day, a direct product of the Christian Gospel, is such as to make it impervious to threats when it comes to matters of belief. The truth must be inherently reasonable and self-evidently appealing, so that faith leaps spontaneously to greet it—if it needs supporting by an appeal to fear it at once falls under suspicion. This does not rule out references to the inevitable consequences of neglecting moral principles, but it does mean a most judicious and careful use of such references. You can't force the pace with youth and get strong and lasting results. We need to be careful lest in our haste to evangelise we reap the *poorer* type of youth for an *imperfect* decision whilst losing and even alienating the stronger sturdier type. In this matter more haste may certainly be less speed for the Church.

More and more the appeal to youth must be couched in the generous terms of service and good-of-others rather than of self-interest. Terms of Duty will appeal more than terms of Gain. The saving of one's own soul *out of relation* to other souls holds next to no attraction for the highly socialised consciousness of our time. This

is all to the good, for undoubtedly a great deal of the Church's weakness in the past has been due to the fact that *men and women have come to Christ for essentially selfish reasons and have maintained that selfish temper and attitude side by side with their Christian profession.* Fundamentally Christian conversion is from the principle that seeks to save its own life to the principle that is willing to lose it for Christ's sake.

III

But a further fundamental weakness even of much modern evangelism is that it cannot or will not relate itself intelligibly to the "mental context" in the mind of the hearer. The human mind whilst it has an uncanny and dangerous power of keeping its knowledge in water-tight compartments, is never quite happy under such an attempt. Its need for unity is frustrated, and its power of thought is restless until it can see coherence in all its thinking or at least a large measure of coherence. Nothing is more pathetic than the way in which human minds are constantly falling victims to plausible systems of teaching *simply because they are coherent.* This is a truth the modern evangelist must recognise. It is a legitimate hunger in the minds of his hearers, especially the more intelligent of them. How does your gospel stand related to the rest of well-authenticated knowledge? Is your heavenly ladder of truth hung tantalisingly in the mists and clouds of mid-air or does one end rest solidly upon the earth? The appeal to human experience, to the real self-evident nature of the

moral and spiritual needs of the soul, to the plain trend of being through all the ages, taking due though not overdue note of the findings of science —this is the kind of appeal which will call forth a big response from the youth of to-day.

These conditions the writer endeavours to fulfil in his evangelism of which this address is a fair specimen. As to methods of discovering decision, he prefers the individual interview to any public demonstration. The young adolescent responds very freely to the public invitation to come forward *the moment a lead is secured.* It is the leader who is the real trophy—the others may stand when committed, but one doubts if it is in their best interests to achieve the poorer imitative type of decision rather than the richer. The writer is a pastor rather than evangelist, but his ministry is governed by the evangelical passion, and especially would he say to his fellow-ministers, "Shepherd the young of your flock" by close personal attention—that is the soundest evangelism.

THE GOLDEN HOUR OF LIFE

"My Son, give Me thine heart."—PROVERBS xxiii. 26.

THERE can scarcely be a better way of celebrating a Sunday School Anniversary than by those elder scholars, who know within their own souls that the hour for their definite decision for Christ has come, making brave and clear acknowledgment of their surrender to Him. It is with that splendid possibility in view that I ask you to think with me for a while of the Golden Hour of human experience.

What is the greatest hour of life? Scarcely the hour when you were born, for then all was so immature and your own decision played no part. Nor is it the hour of death, though that will come to us all and is solemn enough. But then the opportunities of this life will all be past. Between those great hours is there not another—a great focal hour in which is gathered up all the meaning of the past and from which all the future takes new and more glorious shape? Religion has always believed in such an hour. Even in savage and primitive days religion used to concentrate the meaning and dignity of human life into one great experience of initiation. Every savage race to-day has its peculiar rites for the introduction of youth into the responsibilities of full membership in the tribe or nation. It is not surprising, therefore, that Christianity, the purest and most redemptive faith of all, should lay peculiar stress upon the great turning point of life, this hour of the soul's awakening, this experience when the meaning of ALL pours its golden splendour in benediction over the soul.

In recent times, however, a tendency has crept into our churches to ignore the necessity and value of this red-letter experience. The idea that it is possible for the child to grow imperceptibly and gradually into a mature Christian has left scarcely any room for a golden hour of supreme and sublime feeling and unique moral decision. Surely this is wrong. I confess to a fear lest many children to-day should grow up to manhood and womanhood without the benediction of deeply sacred memories. It must certainly be so with the children of our modern pagans—that sad

"third generation" who grow up without religion at all, whose grandparents abandoned the habit of worship whilst the second generation was still in childhood. Think of those lives maturing with only human memories in their possession—with no remembered thrill and awe of hallowed hours of prayer in home or church when God drew nigh and touched their lives with unforgettable splendour! But just as bad proportionately must it be for youth to advance in its Christian education so uneventfully and so unfeelingly that it possesses no outstanding and finally hallowing experiences. Where there is no depth of feeling, can religion be other than shallow and superficial? What one suspects is that the deep feeling, the high and thrilling aspirations that are native to youth, become repressed in this cold ultra-respectable atmosphere that blights so many churches, and the romance and splendour of Christian discipleship goes unrealised and undiscovered.

Every life at some point or other passes the rubicon between immature semi-responsible judgment and real adult-hood. Every life, as it were, passes a point where its understanding of the meaning of life, or at least its desire to understand, is thoroughly aroused. At that point Christ comes to meet *you* with a challenge that means a crisis—that leaves you for ever better or worse than it finds you. On the threshold of real life God waits to give you a Golden Hour of Understanding, of Initiation and Decision. Let us look at the three great factors that go to the making of this Golden Hour of Life.

I

The Awakening of the Soul to the meaning of Life. If I understand aright the young hearts to which I am speaking, you are filled with a great and wistful desire to find the real true meaning of Life. Every now and again you are baffled in your quest—which is largely a very secret one—and then you plunge into gaiety and sport and pleasure to hide your disappointment. Some of you perhaps have even drugged the desire in you with these things, innocent enough as they are in themselves, but as I speak you feel it rising again, do you not? Let me try to answer your longing. Part of the answer lies behind you in all that has gone to your making. You are a child of the Stars literally—you are the offspring of all that has ever been. Think of some of the forces that have made you.

Think first of *the millenniums of material development.* Blazing suns and circling planets, all the mighty array of the starry heavens from which this earth came forth. Long ages of geological changes, the fashioning of continents and their sundering by oceans, the Earth prepared for Life! All this was for you!

Then, too, recall the *long travail of life itself.* There were immense ages of animal development, life conquering the land from the sea, travelling from the shore to the cliff and the cave, from the caves to the woods, from the woods to the garden and the plain. Man has arrived! and life moves on from the plain to the village, the town, the city!

But the story is only begun, for we must think

also of *the mighty epic of human history.* To the making of this heart of yours that God claims to-night has gone the majestic and infinite sacrifice of all past humanity. H. G. Wells, in his *Last Things,* illustrates impressively, if amusingly, this great fact that you are a child of all the race. He advises us to count our ancestors. One father and mother, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great, etc. By the time one gets to the Roman Empire one's ancestors number the population of the then known world! Countless numbers of bodies and souls have come and gone upon this planet to make you what you are to-day in this present world. You are the heir of all the ages.

But out of this general sacrifice we must select for special remembrance *that holiest element in it* which by its glad free sacrifice has made our moral and spiritual inheritance so rich. All the martyrs for liberty, truth, purity and goodness! All the waymakers and pathfinders of the Kingdom of God!

Finally, centre and source of that golden vein of purest sacrifice for you stands Jesus Christ, the revelation of the very Spirit and Life of God. Though you may never acknowledge Him, you cannot escape your indebtedness to Him—fountain and fire as He is of all that is best in our life.

Even yet, however, we may not have glimpsed the meaning of it all. What conceivable purpose can we attribute to this mighty panorama of creation and history? Well, the soul of man is obviously the goal, for in it all there is nothing greater than the soul. The whole process so far

as we can judge only rises to the point of understanding in the human soul. No more reasonable explanation exists, therefore, than that assumed by Jesus, and so strikingly expressed by St. Paul. "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The goal of Creation and of all development since is the production of beings, who, with the freedom and understanding and love of real sons and daughters, can look up to God and cry in full and glad self-surrender "Father!"

Take this explanation, and with it you can unlock every mystery in the story of the past. This "increasing purpose of the ages" explains, for example, the evolution of humanity from an animal level of existence. If you ask what is the purpose of the vast menagerie of animal life, you begin to see in the light of this crowning truth that by means of the animal God has built up our human individuality. The pressure of the intense self-regarding instinct in the animal world has steadily isolated animal souls one from another, making it possible to produce Man as a strongly individualised being. Only this process and only this condition of highly conscious Selfhood could give any meaning or value to the ultimate return or response of the human soul to God. It is the free love of a child God seeks from man, not the forced return of a slave mind, a mere puppet or creature. And the choice that faces every soul on the threshold of real responsible life is the choice of clinging to its individuality and living selfishly or making of its individual self a gift to God in co-operation and loving service.

Every soul registers that issue. It is native to the mind of youth. God's Spirit overshadows every youthful life here calling for the dedication of its powers to Others and supremely to the Other. You may not have worked out its meaning in the way I have presented it to you—but you know in your heart that it is absolutely wrong to live selfishly and absolutely right to live with heroic unselfishness. God has not left you without witness—His bell rings in your soul—all your life henceforth must be a choice between these two issues unless you settle the matter now. You are on the verge of your Golden Hour with God—the hour in which you will decide once and for all by giving yourself to Him. And with every soul that so returns to God, the meaning of this vast Universe is newly consummated, and "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God."

II

The Response of the Soul to God. Through all the story of nature and humanity, as your own being through conscience and the sublime longings of which you are conscious bears witness, God has been making and seeking you. What shall be the character of your response? Suppose you do not respond at all! Then all life will become for you a flight from God and, as Francis Thompson warns us so eloquently in *The Hound of Heaven,* "all things betray thee, who betray'st Me"; "all things deny thee, who deniest Me." "Thou dravest love from thee who dravest Me." But if you respond how shall it be? Will you be

content to drift insensibly towards Him, making as little as possible of the occasion? Do you think that with this new understanding of what is taking place, you can just glide unsensationally, easily, almost indifferently, into right relationship to Him?

God's choice of you has meant eternal sacrifice to Him. Christianity has always measured God's passion for your soul and mine by the agony of Jesus at Calvary. There God's heart in its deathless love of sinful humanity is unveiled. Can you answer that Cross glibly and easily? If we saw this thing aright, you and I, would it not mean the girding up of all our strength, the gathering together of all our being, the ardent application of our thought, the exaltation of our feelings, the steadfast bracing of our will, to such a choice of God as would carry with it the utmost deliberation, the most perfect dignity, the fullest responsibility conceivable? Only thus surely should God be answered.

There is an illustration that Jesus would have loved right at our door, upon our own hearthstone. There is often in these days a wanton and foolish heedlessness and lack of reverence in our home relationships. For how many lads is home just a hotel, with Mother for manageress and Father for proprietor? There the boy sits at meals, mum and dumb, with no vital link evident between him and his parents. In and out he goes, taking all their love for granted, and making a very poor return for the years of care that have clothed and sheltered him. Yet no home comes to its full meaning till it finds a soul, till the parents and children are bound together, not

merely by physical ties, but all over again by ties of the Spirit, fully, consciously, responsibly entered into by all concerned.

Let me advise some of you growing lads on the threshold of manhood to do something that will give your fathers the shock of their life. Take your father on one side some time—he has often taken you on one side!—and looking him straight in the eyes, and gripping his hand as hard as you can, just say to him: "Father, I'm nearly a man now, and I want to say to you that I'm downright glad *you* are my father. I love you, and want to tell you so!" Do you know that, in those words of frank responsible avowal of reverence and love, all the myriad sacrifices your father has made for you will be forgotten in the deep and perfect joy with which his love is consummated in you, his son?

You girls—do that with your mothers. You will not know yet, though you may in future years, what it means for a mother to yearn for her daughter's real trust and love. "She confides in everybody else but me"; is that your mother's lament? Do you take her love for granted and leave her to guess at yours? If so, her little world of home is stultified—its purpose unfulfilled even yet.

And there in miniature is a picture of God and Man—God and you. The Heavenly Father has His heedless sons and daughters—His children—growing up to responsibility—from whom He yearns to hear that declaration of trust and love which will give Him unhindered thoroughfare in their life. For that consent He must wait. "He cannot deny Himself," and having made you for

a son, He cannot treat you as a creature. He stoops to plead with you, "My son give Me thine *heart.*"

Shall your response then not be made with the fullest dignity and deepest solemnity? Will you not set aside some hour that shall be all golden with decision and glad free surrender?

III

God's Acceptance of the Gift. I believe the day is coming when not only the necessity of this Golden Hour with God for every soul will be recognised, but by right training and due development there will be a grand unanimity of movement in surrender to God of our youth in the mass. It will no longer be an experience into which this one enters to-day and that one to-morrow, but in "countless hosts" our Christian youth, brought to the Golden Hour of decision by a common course of training, will "stream through the gates of pearl" in happy thrilling fellowship. What days they will be for the Church! What an hour that will be—for God!

We do not think of this matter enough from His side. What must it mean for Him to "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," as one by one His children give their hearts for ever to Him in final devotion? What must it mean for Him to secure your heart and life as a new base for His great Redemptive work in the race?

And do you think you can really give yourself to Him thus and there be no movement from Him? *Golden indeed will be that hour when you feel descending upon your soul the infinite peace,*

"the joy unspeakable and full of glory" that is the sign of His acceptance of your holy gift!

Will you not seek that final blessing—that deep abiding knowledge borne in upon your heart and brain by God's own Spirit that you are His and He is yours for ever and for ever? There are few things more wonderful in the experience of the faithful disciple of Jesus than the way the conviction of the reality and grace of God grows steadily upon the soul. Truly Christ brings us to "the Father." And though after such an hour you must go down again into the Valley of Testing where your loyalty and faith will be tried to the utmost, as, indeed, it must be, yet you will carry with you through all the valley's humiliation the knowledge of what you learned in the Mount of Decision. As the traveller says to himself: "The city I saw from the hill must still be there," though in the lowlands he loses sight of it, so you will judge all your life by the experience of this hour. Its golden splendour will shed its radiance on every step of your future path. Its testimony will light your way through every time of temptation and of gloom. God has made choice of you! In creation, in Christ, in the witness of your own heart!

Have *you* nothing to say to Him to-night?

Chapter III

DOING DOES IT

By

W. KAYE DUNN, B.A.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the writer, when missioning, is to so use the teachings of Modern Psychology, as to bring home to men and women, boys and girls, that Christianity is supreme commonsense, and is necessary to their highest efficiency. He seeks to persuade them, by force of unescapable facts, to accept Jesus Christ as their Master, and to publicly declare that acceptance by regular attendance at the Lord's Table, and by entry into Church Membership. Because of these supreme and Divinely appointed tests, no others are used —no after meetings, no holding up of hands, no intrusion whatever upon the lawful privacy of the hearer.

The address which follows is the fourth and last in a short psychology series, freely illustrated on the black board. In the previous addresses the teacher has dealt with the existence of habit channels; their formation unwittingly in the past; how they may be controlled; the making of new habits; the seriousness of sin; the forgiveness of sin, which is not only promised in the Bible but arranged for in the very brain itself; the necessity of giving the whole heart to Christ.

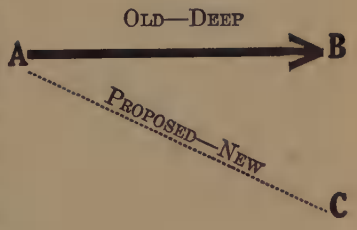
The writer hopes that by such a use of the New Psychology he has brought home to his hearers, with intensity, the truth that if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold! all things are become new.

At this point in the series, some in the congregation or "School," may have resolved to sign the simple pledge:—"I now decide to accept Jesus Christ as my Master." To such this teaching is offered. It may be called in technical terms the Psychology of Sanctification.

DOING DOES IT

I AM sure that many of you have been thinking over the teachings of the past three days. Some of you have arrived at a new understanding of your mental machinery. You have resolved no longer to live as a sort of irresponsible stowaway on board your own ship. You intend henceforth, under God, to be the intelligent engineer of it. You have resolved to get rid of certain deeply marked bad-habit channellings, and to cultivate other and good-habit paths to take their place. Good, very good! I believe in your earnestness, and congratulate you.

Yet, let us carefully understand, in the light of these teachings, just what you have, and have not, done. You have decided that the old habit channel, A-B, so deeply cut, shall be put out of use, and that a new



one, A-C, shall take its place. Excellent again. But promisings cut no channels, even as plans for homes build no houses.

It is only the passage of an actual current across the brain that makes the new markings of that new channel A-C. In short—Doing does it.

* * * * *

Thus we see the truth of the old saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. No poor soul that has arrived at its hell—here, in this world—but has said fifty times, "I will not do it again." It was said in great earnestness too—but good resolutions cut no channels! The poor fellow who signed the pledge for the twentieth time would have opened up the first tracks of a new teetotalism, had he walked past the door of his drinking haunt. But, alas, he did not. Doing and doing alone, does it!

Are you jealous? It is because you have built into the nerve matter of your brain an apparatus for jealousy. No man who wishes to succeed in this world can afford to be jealous. Jealousy sends out a wireless that arouses in other people a hindering jealousy in reply. Here is how a big business man used these teachings to rid himself of this hindrance. He resolved that within twenty-four hours of hearing of the commercial success of any business competitor, he would see him, or 'phone him, or write him in congratulation; and, moreover, he would cheerfully tell three other people of the success. And he did. That man used his new path four times on every possible occasion, with the natural result that he has not a streak of jealousy in him to-day. Doing does it.

Too many people get no permanent good out of mission services because they mistake shivers in the spine for proofs of conversion. Faith, indeed, we must have, but if the real faith is there, it will reveal itself in works rather than in emotional shivers. It is no proof of faith in Christ that one sheds tears on hearing a choice rendering of "He was despised." Doing does it! It is only when the doing of the new thing sends the brain current along a new channel for the first time, that the real building up of Christian character begins.

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Seeing that *only* doing does it, never pigeonhole a new resolution until you have begun on it. So to speak, never let the written pledge out of your hand until you can write across it "Begun." I had in my London Church a workgirl with a very pert tongue, who, when she became a Christian and thought out the things she would have to do differently, put down first on the list "being cheeky to my forewoman." Had you known the girl you would have approved her decision. She went to business on Monday morning full of her new resolution. But if her supervisor should not speak to her she would have no chance of replying in the Christian way, and so could cut no new channel. Moreover, if no such conversation occurred on Tuesday or Wednesday, there would be a real danger of the new resolution being forgotten and forsaken. So my advice to this girl was, "If your forewoman has not spoken to you by eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, you go and speak to her—*e.g.,* ask her if she said that the making order you are working on is for ten dozen

or twelve. Then when she has told you say your first courteous 'Thank you, Miss!' " After making resolutions, *make opportunities.*

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Nor does it matter how you feel whilst you are doing it. Doing does it. Take the question of forgiveness. On Sunday your minister brings it home to you that there is no escape from the plain teaching of Christ—you must forgive. As he speaks you feel the weight of God's word, and resolve to obey it; and in particular you resolve that the next time you meet Brown, whom you have been avoiding for eighteen months, you will say "Good morning" to him, and do it cheerfully and handsomely. With that in your mind you walk home a happy man, resolved on a good deed. But nothing is done yet, nor can anything be done until you meet Brown. On the following Wednesday you see him coming towards you, less than a hundred yards away. Then you begin to feel faint, and to tremble at the knees. Something within you whispers that you are not quite well to-day, that it would be wise to let Brown pass this time, though you will certainly hail him to-morrow when you feel better. But if you cross the road and avoid the interview you have also avoided your first channelling, and, moreover, deepened the old one. Never mind how you feel! Only doing does it, and you must do it now! Walk right on! Possibly the absence of saliva in your mouth, through nervousness, will so dry up your tongue that only a very indistinct guttural will escape you, in place of the "handsome Good morning" you had intended on the Sunday. But to utter even that poor guttural, the thought

current went across your brain in the new direction, and so created the first track of a new habit channel. As a piece of elocution no doubt the utterance was a failure, but as an effort towards a Christian manhood the whole incident was a triumphant success. It will be slightly easier to do it in better fashion to-morrow. In a week or so that channel will be deep enough to enable you to say your "Good morning" quite passably. By and by you will become a large-souled forgiving man, and with the frequent forgiving will come the easy forgetting.

Do not be afraid of "ghastly failures." They are generally first steps towards man-making successes—for doing does do it. How terrified most of us are of being voted "clumsy"! We choose to lose heaven rather than be guilty of doing a good deed somewhat awkwardly. There was a fool who said that he would never go into the water until he could swim—a parable that, with a point for some Christian folk! You must be willing to be clumsy for Christ's sake—and your own.

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And Not-doing does not do it. In the matter of home lessons not done, you may have got round your old school teacher occasionally. But you can never get your own brain to give you marks for what you have not done. If you do not do, you get no channelling. Hence Jesus continually insists that we must do what He says. "Why call ye Me Lord, and do not the things I say?" He says that in lieu of deeds He will not accept complimentary words such as "Lord, Lord, dear Lord." His one test is, What are you

doing about these things of mine? James employs sarcasm when he writes, "Thou believest! Thou doest well!! The devils also believe, and tremble!!!" The Christian believes—and does. John, speaking in the name of Jesus, says, "Do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick." Peter declares, "If ye do these things ye shall never fall."

Again, Jesus says, "Whosoever shall do and teach these things shall be called great in *the* kingdom of heaven." These people shall be called great because they are great. For behind this saying is the truth that we do not know a thing properly until we can, and do, teach it—a weighty reason that for being a thorough-going Sunday-school teacher.

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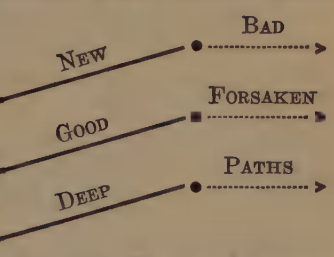
At another time Jesus likened His hearers to men who built houses either on rock or on sand. (Note that He spoke this parable to His hearers, to those who actually had climbed the Mount, and heard the Sermon, and not to those who were not there.) In the light of these teachings on Habit-channellings, we can see the causes behind the effects.

Imagine the case of the man who was likened to a builder on sand. That man, as he listened to Jesus, felt that the Master had brought home to him the three danger habits of his life. He went away, told all and sundry what a searching sermon Jesus had preached, but did nothing differently. Three months later circumstances combined to throw him into a mental storm. He was excited beyond control. In his heat he said and

did those three evil things in the sight of men—and from that day his standing and reputation were washed clean away.

To be plunged into the unexpected mental storm is, sooner or later, the sure fate of every one of us. It may be upon you before your supper this very evening. An annoying young brother may "get on your nerves," and provoke you to so passionate an outburst that you swear at him before you quite know that you have done it. That is the first time your people at home have heard you swear. Hitherto, you have reserved the evil practice for business use only. But the swearing habit-channels had been so deeply cut that the torrent surged into them and out in speech—and instantly you felt that your high standing with your people had received a blow from which it would never recover—swept away like a house built on sand.

But the other type of Christ's hearer, when it was brought home to him that he possessed three deep danger channels, went away and, as a sincere disciple of Jesus, began to do differently. In three months' time he had opened up three good and deep brain paths. Surely and swiftly came the storm to him, and in reply thereto he poured out three glorious deeds—and stood forth a revealed man. He was seen of men to be as a house built on the rock.



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The great teachers of psychology tell us that

each day we should deliberately do one thing we would rather not do. Thereby we keep our path-digging spirit fit and ready for new situations. These items done against the grain are by no means to be great deeds, *e.g.*, picking up paper that we have not thrown down, fetching coals when it is not exactly our duty to do so, taking a turn with the tea towel, being courteous to a discourteous person. Trifles? Yes, and so are fire insurance premiums, a mere two shillings covering us against a hundred pounds' fire loss. But the daily doing of these trifles is one of the daily premiums of a first-class manhood. Men like Shackleton and Scott, of the Antarctic, do not graduate from armchairs. Scott blackened his willing hands a thousand times, where some suburban dude would not have unbuttoned his suede gloves. "Do not bring him up softly," Scott wrote in his last letter concerning his little son.

> "In life's small things, be resolute and great
> To keep thy muscle trained:
> Knowest thou when God thy measure takes?
> Or when He'll say to thee
> 'I find thee worthy. Do this for Me.'"

I have ventured to alter James Russell Lowell's word "fate" to the richer word "God."

Every day do one thing against the grain—that is the new teaching. New, indeed! Jesus taught it centuries ago! "Take up thy cross DAILY." You do not take up Jesus once for all on an exciting Sunday night. You retake Him daily, especially in the days of the humdrum, when it is no sparkling episode to be a Christian. It is

a greater thing to scrub an unpoetic floor for Christ's sake, than to lilt into an enquiry room.

Conversion is the resetting of one's whole self for action along new lines. Conversion is the readjustment of the whole working machinery of manhood. To decide to accept Christ as Master is to begin to do all that one does on His lines instead of on our own.

The moment you begin to Do the teachings of Jesus, that moment you begin to put in the new channellings of a new creature in Christ—and not a moment before. That is not to contradict instant forgiveness on the part of God. He does not await results before accepting you. He trusts you from the moment you give Him your promise. In the New Testament a man is regarded as being, there and then, what he intends to be. The would-be saints are called saints, though as a matter of fact their saintship was often very crude, as witness the "saints at Corinth." God believes in us infinitely more than we believe in Him. Decide to be a Christian, and He instantly treats you as one. But do not trade on such generosity, and forget to begin on what you have promised to do.

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Two things more. Only the doing of the real thing will give you the right channel. I say that because so many do the pretend thing, and get the corresponding channel. I knew a man who was always working for his own ends, yet whatever he did he would do his best to bring it home to the other people involved that he had been at work solely in their interests. At last, I think he did not know when he was pretending and

when he was not. That is probably the explanation why certain prominent people who have rogued the public are now in prison, and feeling very unjustly treated. Be the real thing! You cannot deceive your own brain. You can, though, put in a series of channellings that will cause you to become the deceiver of your self. If you forgive, forgive—forgive and have done with it. Do not pretend to forgive, or you will get only the "pretend" channel.

And this: I have a book which tells me all about typewriting, how to arrange the fingers, touch the shift keys, etc., etc. Having read the book, and enjoyed it, I sat down to my machine —and found I could not type. No, only doing does it! Neither can you play the piano on the study of a primer on the subject. Czerney's, or any one else's, exercises must be practised thousands of times, not in Czerney's interest, but in the interests of your own fingers, which, in no other way, can attain to the flexibility and independence required for skilful pianoforte playing. Neither can you be a Christian on sermons! You must go out and do! "Believe and do," says Peter. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," said Jesus.

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Jesus comes to us to say that the door of the home of God stands open to us. We are invited to enter again, as the prodigal re-entered his father's house. But the entering is only the first step. The day after the feast the doing begins.

Paul, after setting forth the story of the humility and death of Jesus, and of the salvation He offers to all, then adds, "Work Out your own

salvation." Lay hold of it, get to work on it, unravel it, experiment with it, find out all the possibilities in it. Worked at after this fashion, Christianity will develop you until you arrive at the fulness of the stature of Christ Himself.

Decide to accept Jesus Christ as your Master, and with that resolution in your mind, go out and begin on life anew. It is a very sensible and a very sane thing to be a decided Christian. So with all your senses, and all your sanity, without tears and excitement, quietly reset your life for the doing of the Christian thing.

Chapter IV

PRESENTING THE GOOD NEWS

By

LIONEL B. FLETCHER

INTRODUCTION

The question which is asked most frequently by ministers who are seeking help and guidance from evangelists of experience is, "What appeal do you find most effective to-day as you face the modern type of young men and young women?"

It is impossible to answer that question in a sentence, and it is equally impossible definitely to outline any message which will universally appeal to the youth of to-day. A fairly wide experience of evangelistic work in Britain proves that there is no one type of address which will be successful to the same extent in all parts of our country. The fact is, that although men and women are very much alike all over the world, they are at the same time widely different in outlook and mentality. Environment, training, nationality, education and denominational emphasis, make a great deal of difference in the affectiveness of those who are being approached. For example (although there are exceptions, and, of course, it is impossible to generalise), if an audience of sailors is being addressed, it will soon be found that it is more emotional and sentimental

than an audience of soldiers. It is also true that an appeal which will move the steel workers of England, is not always the appeal which will move the colliers of Wales. On the other hand, an East Anglian audience often remains cold to a challenge which would set a Lancashire gathering on fire.

It has been said that a university education alters all this. It does make a certain difference, but it is extremely doubtful if an academic training ever utterly eradicates a national characteristic, or completely eliminates the emotional susceptibilities which some people possess.

There are themes, however, which will find some response wherever they are dealt with by preachers who are fired by their message. The appeal of the Cross of Christ is unique in its almost universal effect. The fact of sin still faces the human heart in spite of all that has been said about this present generation having lost its sense of guilt. The need of salvation is still realised, consciously or unconsciously; and the challenge to the heroic will always find a response in the lives of those who are capable of self-sacrificial service.

What the evangelist is faced with is not the question of what men and women ought to be thinking and feeling, but what they are actually thinking and feeling. He is out to meet his hearers where he finds them, and to win them for Christ. After they have enlisted in Christ's service, if their ministers feel that they need educating in a more enlightened theology or mode of thought, that is the ministers' responsibility.

The methods which I have adopted in conducting the New Life Campaign have been varied, but the heart of the message has been the same everywhere. First and foremost has come the exaltation of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Then due place has been given to dealing with the terrible effects of sin. The challenge to service, with its demand for self-sacrifice and heroic endeavour for the glory of God and the salvation of the world, has always had its prominent place. The peril of putting off the day of personal decision has been emphasised, while the attractiveness of the love of God, with its miracle-working power even in the most unlovely lives, has been laid before the hearers. The difference between respectability and definite personal relationship to God in Christ Jesus has been constantly spoken about, and so warning, entreating, challenging and pleading have been blended in the endeavour to bring men and women to seek that personal experience which may be theirs for the claiming, that they may know themselves to be the children of God.

It is clear that in evangelistic work the dominant note must be that of personal relationship to God. The evangelist must point individuals to Christ as their only Saviour, and urge them to begin a definitely Christian life by enthroning Him in their lives. Having done this, their clear duty is to go out with utter dedication to serve their God and their fellow-men, and if they do this their lives will be changed and ennobled, and others will see and appreciate the change.

No evangelist's method or message can possibly be judged by one sermon or by one mission.

The circumstances of the place and the nature of the work in hand have always to be taken into consideration.

Sometimes I use a series of addresses in a mission, but generally the addresses have been an attempt to lead the thought of those present from stage to stage, in an endeavour to set forth the claims of Christ from as many standpoints as the time will allow. The following outline of a sermon will serve to show the type of address which I have sometimes used as the close of a mission draws near, and when the danger of delay in personal decision is being emphasised. It is quite different from many other types of addresses which I have delivered, when, for example, the challenge for service was the dominant note; but it is given here to show the style of address which I felt was needed in certain places, and which has been used of God to bring many to decision and surrender.

PRESENTING THE GOOD NEWS

"And as Paul reasoned of righteousness and temperance (Margin: Self-control) and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified and answered, 'Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me.'"—Acts xxiv. 25 (R.V.)

Felix was here faced by the greatest opportunity of his life. This was true, because he and Drusilla were listening to the world's greatest preacher, and also because he was being moved by the Holy Ghost. It is a great thing to preach the Gospel, and it is also a great thing to hear the Gospel preached by a man who loves God and who seeks to win souls. Some Churches are proud of the

men who have been their ministers, and some people are proud of the great preachers they have heard; but every time we hear the Gospel preached, our responsibility is added, for we have had laid before us some aspects of the truth concerning God and His revelation. Felix could never again say that he had not heard of Jesus Christ and His revelation. He could never again excuse himself by saying he had not heard the way of salvation set out. He was listening to a man who believed in Christ and Him crucified, and who in burning words was now exalting that same Christ.

The record shows that Paul did not attempt to spare his hearers, but he spoke in direct terms concerning their sin, and of the spiritual danger which they were in, and he warned them of the judgment which would overwhelm them if they did not repent. That his words were perfectly understood is shown by the fact that "Felix was terrified," but this also shows that Felix was moved by the Holy Ghost who was convicting him of his sin and moving him to repent.

Here we have God's method of approach to the human soul. He does not send angels to preach to us, for if He did we might well say that they had never known sin, and, therefore, did not understand our difficulties and temptations. But He sends sinful men like ourselves, who have had personal experience of the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, through which they have found forgiveness and life. Their words at best are weak, and perhaps unconvincing, but the Holy Ghost is always present to bring conviction and to lead to repentance and Salvation.

No meeting where Christ is exalted is ever held without His presence; therefore, we know that He is in our midst. Then again in answer to the prayers of God's people we may be sure that the Holy Spirit is now present striving with those here who do not yet know Christ as their Saviour. This is God's part. No tremendous upheaval of nature to strike terror into our hearts; no miraculous appearance to compel our belief; no crashing blow to force us in humility to His feet. Just the broken words of a sinful man who has found life in Jesus Christ, and who now comes to you with this glorious Gospel of grace, and over and above that the Holy Spirit is moving in your hearts constraining you to surrender, to turn and believe the Gospel of the Son of God.

It was the greatest opportunity of the life of Felix, but it is the greatest opportunity in your life too, for here and now the invitation comes to you to accept Christ as your Saviour and your King. Nothing can force the citadel of your soul. As some one has said, "God respects the privacy of every man's soul, for He stands at the door and knocks, but He never enters unless He is welcomed." In your possession is the great power of refusal or surrender, and the result is eternal.

Felix was faced by the greatest question of his life. First of all it was a question concerning his future conduct in this present life, for "Paul reasoned of righteousness and of self-control." In that reasoning he faced Felix with the fact that he had been taking bribes, and his words on righteousness thundered in the Governor's ears. Did he intend to go on in this sinful way of

living? Did he mean to continue to enter false judgments and enrich his pocket by unrighteousness? Paul also faced him with his illicit union with this daughter of Herod who was seated by his side. She was another man's wife, but every hour that he lived with her he was steeped in the sin of adultery and licentiousness. If he hearkened to the voice of the preacher, and if he yielded to the call of God within his soul, his whole future life must be changed. He would lose money, and he must leave this woman who was his companion in sin.

The demand of the Gospel is that the whole of this present life must be changed. It was then, and it is so now. An emotional assent to certain doctrines, unless accompanied by a daily application of the teaching of Christ to the personal life, is useless. Christ says that those who love Him, keep His commandments. There can be no compromise. A rigid attendance at the Church and a regular observance of ordinances cannot make up for a lack of consistent living and an absence of Christlikeness in our daily relationships.

If you to-night hear the voice of God, and if you here and now decide to take Christ as your Saviour and Lord, then you must be prepared to pay the cost. It will mean that from to-night old things must pass away and all things will become new. Your business methods perhaps will be changed; your habits may have to be purified; or some other drastic alterations may have to be made in your life, and it may cost you money, position, or influence, but whatever the price, it must be paid if you are to become a child of God.

There are many people who have carelessly drifted into sinful ways of life, and who need awakening to their danger. Face your position, therefore, and examine your condition, and if you know them to be wrong, ask yourself this candid question, "Am I prepared to go on living in sin, or should I turn now and accept Christ and follow Him?"

No one can deny that there are some who have deliberately chosen evil. If there are any such here, then these words are for you, because undoubtedly if that choice is persisted in, nothing but disaster can possibly be the result. You are wronging your own soul; you are trampling beneath your feet the sacrifice of Christ and are putting Him to open shame; you are deliberately allying yourself with the forces of evil, and you are living in open enmity to God. In this moment in the name of God, I face you with the situation in all its ghastly tragedy, and I ask you, "Do you intend to finish life like that? Are you prepared to go out and meet God in that terrible condition? Are you satisfied to go on living on that low plane, knowing that you are degrading and defiling your own soul?"

Surely there can be no more important matter facing our lives than the way we decide to live out the remainder of our days in this world. No man in his better moments is proud of his sin; and no woman in her times of earnest reflection is satisfied with that which is unworthy. Within each of us, the higher and nobler impulses sometimes hold sway. This is an evidence that the Spirit of God is calling us to the life which is life indeed. At such times we have visions of

spiritual possibility which set us longing for the spiritual things of life, and it is the preacher's privilege to be able to proclaim with certainty, that those nobler impulses and dreams have a living reality in Christ Jesus. He saves from past sin, and He saves from future sin. In Him is power to take the weakest and most sinful, and make them more than conquerors, so that stained and helpless and even vile as they may be, by His transforming love and grace, they shall rise up more than conquerors and attain to nobility of character, as the children of God.

I believe this with all my heart and soul, and, therefore, my plea to you here and now is, that this night you shall place your life at His disposal. His grace is sufficient, and His sacrifice avails, and the word of His welcome is, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You will break your best resolutions, and your most eager endeavours after goodness will not bring you peace, unless you surrender yourself, body, mind and soul, unto Christ, but if you come to Him in sincerity, He will perform in you a miracle of grace.

The call is urgent, for life is passing. Delay no longer, but to-night step into this life of new power and purpose, and the future will be rich in the building of your own character and also in leading others to choose the highest.

It was the greatest question which had ever faced Felix, because it not only had to do with his future in this life, but it had to do with his future in eternity.

The man who fails to take eternity into his reckoning is a fool. All through God's word

there is the urgent advice to prepare for the eternity which awaits us. This present life is a time of preparation, and according as we live now, so shall we enter eternity.

Felix saw God seated on His throne of judgment and he himself a sinner before the bar of justice. He as a judge had taken bribes and entered false judgments, but God would deal justly, therefore there would be no escape for him. He trembled and was terrified at the prospect, for in front of him stretched the endless ages of the future life which he would have to face, a guilty, condemned soul. It was the greatest question of his life, for it had to do with all time. How should he spend it?

It is also the greatest question of your life. When you face God on His judgment throne, how will you appear? All outward forms of religion and respectability will be stripped away and you will appear as you are, naked in your sin and unrighteousness, and well might the best man on earth tremble at the prospect unless there is one like unto the Son of God standing beside him to plead his cause.

Paul answered the question on the road to Damascus when he saw Christ face to face, high and lifted up, Holy and wonderful beyond all human thought and conception. In that moment he knew himself for a sinner; he knew his religious zeal as mistaken self-righteousness, and he knew he was fighting against God. He cried out in surrender, and, changing his attitude towards God and His truth, he went forth to proclaim the Gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ his Saviour and Lord.

Felix had the same vision, and the same opportunity, and so have you. What are you going to do about it? Millions of people live as if they had unlimited time before them, instead of which many of them are at this very moment walking into eternity unprepared. You do not like the preacher to speak of death, and yet it is all around, and his grim form is already at the door of some of your lives, perhaps, and when you hear his knock you must go out to meet your God face to face.

I do not think I ever had this more forcibly impressed upon me than one day in Australia, when I was on the wharf to meet a steamer full of immigrants who were landing from Britain. I can see the great vessel now as she drew up alongside the wharf with her decks black with people, all eager to get ashore after the long voyage, and anxious to see what the new land was like. They were mostly young men and young women and they looked exceedingly happy, laughing and joking with each other. The landing stage was lowered, and instantly there was a rush to get off the steamer. No one knows exactly how it happened, but with a shriek of despair and horror, a young woman fell into the water between the vessel and the wharf. Some of the passengers told me that she was the happiest and most popular young woman on the ship, and she was full of vitality and radiant health. It was all over in a few moments. Every effort was made to rescue her, but when at length her body was placed on the wharf, she was dead. I looked at her face and it was like a picture set in a frame of golden hair, and her blue eyes

stared into the sky. I thought of her people far away, and of all the hopes now suddenly dashed to the ground. A few moments before she was one of the laughing happy throng on the deck of the steamer, now she was in eternity.

Some one has said that death is not a terminus, but it is a door leading into a greater and fuller life, therefore it behooves us to prepare for that life, and to begin our preparation now, or it may be too late. How will you spend the rest of your life here? Where will you spend eternity? The Holy Spirit is now present to help you answer that question aright, and though the prospect may strike terror into your soul, follow His gracious leading, for He will lead you into life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Felix was faced by the greatest crisis of his life. "Felix was terrified and answered ——"

Life was hanging in the balance as he considered the question, and although we well know what his answer was, we almost hold our breath as we wait for his own words. What did he answer? "Go thy way; when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me."

His way out of the crisis was a fatal mistake, for it was his entrance into eternal ruin. There is no record that he ever again was moved by the Holy Spirit, but there is the record that he tried to get bribes from Paul, thus proving that he had not turned from his unrighteousness. It is said that after his marriage to Drusilla a son was born to them, but the mother took her child to a Roman city for a holiday and while there Vesuvius broke out in terrible eruption and they were buried beneath the mass of molten lava and

ashes which poured from the burning mountain. Thus Felix and Drusilla pass off the page of the record, neither of them having heeded the words of warning, and both of them rejecting the way of life.

It is never a convenient season to repent and turn away from sin. As surely as God's Spirit moves you, so surely will a hundred excuses present themselves to your mind, showing why it is not convenient to-day to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You may say, "There is plenty of time; it will be easier when I get older; it will be better when I move to a new locality." But if you leave it now, there will be other excuses later on to entice you away from the decisive act which will commit your life to God. Who knows what to-morrow will bring? There may be circumstances awaiting you which will turn your life into fresh channels, and never again may such an opportunity occur as this present moment for the making of your great decision.

"Go thy way," he said to Paul, but in reality he was saying it to the Holy Spirit of the living God. Do not repeat his fatal mistake. God is seeking your salvation, and the Saviour awaits your first step towards Him in contrition and surrender, that He may take your life and use it in His service, and that He may strengthen every good desire of your heart and build in you a character which shall bring glory to His name. Why should you hesitate? He will receive you with all your sin, with all your past failures, with all your broken resolutions, with all your pride and self-sufficiency, if you will but come to Him and let Him do with you as He wills. His promises

never fail, but even as He has taken countless thousands before and transformed them into saints and priests of God, so He will take you and transform you, if you will humbly lay your life at His feet. From that position you shall arise a child of God, and go from this place with a new dignity and power to live the life and do the work of a child of God.

I am here as God's ambassador to plead with you for my King, and in His name I shall come to the communion table as we sing our concluding hymn of praise, and you who have not previously acknowledged Christ as your Saviour, but will from this night take upon yourself His name, and commit your life into His keeping, I invite to come forward and shake hands with me as a token that you accept the gift of Christ's love. What better time and what better place could you choose to enlist in His service? "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." For the Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Romans x. 10-11).

Chapter V

PROCRASTINATION

By

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, D.D.

EDITORS' NOTE

This sermon was preached by Dr. Fosdick at one of the regular Sunday services in the course of his ministry at the First Presbyterian Church, New York.

PROCRASTINATION

"When I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." —Acts xxiv. 25.

We are to think this morning about the homely and familiar factor of procrastination. Instead of letting our thoughts dwell upon that abstract noun let us from the beginning have in our mind's eye a concrete picture from the life of Paul. Paul had been mobbed and nearly killed by his fellow countrymen in Jerusalem; and, saved only by the intervention of the Roman soldiery, he soon found himself in prison in Caesarea, where he had been taken to escape lynching. There Felix, the governor, was alike his jailer and his judge. One night, when the governor's wife, Drusilla, wished to hear and see this tempestuous and troublesome Jew, Felix had

Paul brought before Him and allowed him freedom to speak. One might have thought that Paul's spirit would have been tamed by his perilous experience; but Paul was always like a fire that is not blown out but fanned to a fiercer heat when the hard winds blow. Let the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Acts tell us the simple narrative: "After certain days Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, 'Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.' "

Felix is one of the most unlovely characters in Scripture, and all that we know of him outside of Scripture simply deepens our distaste for him. Yet it is apparent from this experience of his with Paul that like all the rest of us he was a strange combination of good and bad; that deep in his heart he had chords that the fine, strong fingers of a personality like Paul persuasively could play upon. Bad as he was, let us remember that there was one time when he heard the gospel of Jesus and was stirred by it, when he heard great words about righteousness and self-control, and felt their appeal, when he looked upon his life and the end to which it was tending, and shrank back from it. He was not all bad.

This morning we are going to think of the way he dealt with this significant hour with the apostle. You will notice that he was not abusive and discourteous, he was not blasphemous and sceptical. He merely procrastinated. He simply

postponed decision; he politely waived the matter aside, and said, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." And so he lost the supreme opportunity of his life.

Is it not so that we are continually making failures of our lives? Here in this church, where through another winter we have so repeatedly presented appeals for the Master, for the type of quality and spirit which He represents, for the concrete opportunities of service which His cause offers, one does not suspect that there has been much brusque and deliberate rejection, much scornful and contemptuous scepticism; but one does suspect that among all the people who have gathered here there must have been a great deal of procrastination. It is so popular a method of avoidance. It can be indulged in so easily and without offence. How many times in this church do you suppose these words have in effect been spoken in the hearts of men, "Go thy way for this time: and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me"?

We are all perfectly familiar with this habit of procrastination in practical details. We do not decide not to answer a letter from a friend. We simply postpone answering it. We take it up, and dally with it, and lay it aside for a more convenient time. We do not decide not to make a call that ought to be made. We merely postpone making it. We let the days and weeks pass; and ever, as we postpone it, it becomes easier to postpone it still, until at last the call is never made at all. We never decide not to hear the best music and read the best books. We merely defer doing so. We comfort our consciences by

saying, "Sometime we will see this or hear that." And we never decide not to pay serious attention to the religious education of our children. We simply put it off: we refer it to this nebulous, convenient to-morrow when all letters are going to be answered, all calls made, all privileges enjoyed, and all duties done. With this popular habit of procrastination we are perfectly familiar.

But surely it is not so small and trivial a matter as too frequently we are tempted to suppose. Leonardo da Vinci's picture of the Last Supper was spoiled by a single broken tile through which the rain poured down across the face of Christ. So great a picture to be spoiled by so small a thing! Yet after many years of watching folk from the vantage-point of the ministry I am sure that many lives are spoiled in that way, and that the broken tile is the habit of procrastination.

Pick up the words of Felix this morning, one of the classic utterances of a confirmed procrastinator, and look into them, as in a mirror; they reveal us to ourselves.

First of all, how full of hope they are! Felix is counting on the future. "A more convenient season," he says politely to Paul as he bids him good-night; and at once we are aware that procrastination is the perversion of something good. It is the abuse of hope. It is the misuse of to-morrow. Now, to-morrow is one of God's best gifts to men. The animals do not possess it. They have only to-day—their yesterdays dim and vague, their to-morrows prepared for by instinct, but not by expectation; but man has yesterday and to-day and to-morrow. How utterly bereft

we all should be without that backreach of memory and that outreach of hope! If to-day the clouds overspread our sky, to-morrow the sun may shine again. If to-day sickness has invaded our homes, to-morrow health may come back once more. If to-day our business is vexatious and troublesome, to-morrow may see the turning of the tide that will bring back better times. If to-day our temptations seem insupportable, to-morrow we may find spiritual power to overcome. And, if to-day we are cast down by the weariness and tragedy of this war-rent mankind, we turn to a prophet to encourage us about to-morrow. "My own hope is, a sun will pierce the thickest cloud earth ever stretched." We should all be lost without to-morrow, for in hope we are saved.

But here as always the perversion of the best is the worst, and the perversion of to-morrow is procrastination. For we keep putting off till to-morrow the enjoyment of privileges and the use of opportunities that we ought to rejoice in to-day. I suspect that we ministers are sometimes partly responsible for this very attitude against which I speak. For continually we plead for ideals we are some time to realise but have not yet attained; we urge gains in personal and social life that are some time to be achieved, but are not yet achieved. We fill in the picture of to-morrow with blessings to be enjoyed, ideals to be attained, until the upshot may be that we draw the thought of our people away from what they have to-day to what they may have to-morrow. To-day in our preaching becomes too often something to be overpassed and outgrown, but to-morrow is the home of fulfilled

ideals. There is, however, a serious fallacy in this. We need continually to be reminded not simply of what we may have some time, but of what we do have to-day.

It is a shame to see a man running across his to-days as a boy runs a race, with his eyes tightly fixed upon the far goal, thinking only of what lies ahead. But many men do so run their lives. "To-morrow" they cry, while all the time to-day presents to them privileges and blessings that they run past, not seeing.

"Felix, come out and enjoy the sunset," but Felix says, "To-morrow." But to-morrow the sunset will not be one whit more beautiful than it is to-day if we have eyes to see it.

"Felix, let us rejoice in friendship"; and Felix says, "To-morrow." But friends will not be one bit more beautiful to-morrow than they are to-day if we have eyes to see and hearts to understand.

"Felix, let us grow up with our children, and even here on earth gain a foretaste of heaven which a true home affords." And Felix says, "To-morrow." But your children will not be one whit more fascinating in their youthful companionship to-morrow than they are to-day; and you may say "To-morrow" too long, until there are no children to grow up with in your home at all.

"Felix, let us enter into the sustaining fellowship of Christ, see life from His height, and live it in His spirit"; and Felix says, "To-morrow." But Christ will not be one whit more gracious and redeeming to-morrow than He is to-day.

My friends, after all, to-day is all we actually do possess.

Yesterday is gone, and to-morrow is not yet here; and procrastination is a deadly habit of blinding one's eyes to the opportunities and privileges we have in our hands and dreaming of something that some time we may have. *"Carpe diem,"* cried the old Latins, "Seize the day."

There are many of us who do not learn the significant lesson until we learn it in the hardest of all ways: we lose something that we have had in our possession a long, long time, too little appreciated; and then we wake up to wish above all things that we might have had it back again. So an old man may look back upon the strength of youth that once he had. What a splendid time when he awoke each morning with power sufficient for his tasks, and went out to work with joy! Why did he not appreciate it more when he had it, and get more out of it? Often a man feels so about his friends when they are gone. What tonic, refreshing spirits they were! Why did he not take more advantage of the boon of their fellowship when he had the chance? So, oftentimes, mothers feel about their children. They were so beautiful! Why did they leave them so much with others and live with them so little when they had the chance?

So, continually we are waking up to discover, only when we have lost them, that for years we have had life's choicest privileges within our grasp; for years we have been saying, "To-morrow," while each to-day was filled with unrealised possibilities. You will know where this applies to you. I am sure it does apply, for I am sure that every one of us has in his possession now relationships, blessings, opportunities, privi-

leges, concerning which, after they are gone, he will say, "Why did I not make more of it while I had it?"

My friends, it will not do to go on postponing everything till to-morrow. If a man is going to live a fine, rich, radiant and joyful Christian life, it were better to begin to-day.

Once more pick up these words of Felix and look at them. "A convenient season," he says to Paul, and at once we are aware that he doesn't think that he is deciding the question that Paul has raised. He thinks he has postponed the decision, but he hasn't. For indecisive procrastination is one of the most conclusive methods that mankind knows. Now, the reason for this is perfectly simple. Life's processes do not call a halt simply because we have not made up our minds. If here in New York City or in the country round about you have this spring a garden-plot, you may suppose that you have three choices, either to have flowers, or to have weeds, or to be hesitant, uncertain, indecisive. But, in fact, you have only two choices. If you choose flowers, you may have them; but if you choose to be indecisive, nature will decide for you. You will have weeds. The processes of God's eternal universe do not stop to wait for us to make up our minds. Now, life continually is facing us with these enforced decisions, where to endeavour to escape by procrastination is utter futility. For procrastination is irretrievable decision. Reach down into life at random, anywhere, and you will find illustrations in plenty. Shall we try to stop the starvation of the Chinese? is a question that has been facing us all these winter and spring months.

Do you say you will wait for a more convenient season to make up your mind? You may as well say that you will not help them at all. For the processes of starvation do not cease until you have decided. They still stalk their ghastly way through the Celestial land, and take their toll of thousands and tens of thousands every day. To be indecisive, is not to be indecisive. It is one of the most conclusive, fatal, irretrievable decisions you can make.

Or come in to a more homely episode. You see a purse dropped in the street and you see the one who dropped it. You may suppose you have three choices, either to be honest and return it, be dishonest and keep it, or be indecisive, uncertain. But you have only two choices. If you decide to be indecisive, the processes of life will not wait for you. The crowds will surge in between you and the purse's owner, and the opportunity of being honest which was yours for a moment will vanish; and, while you yourself will not decide, life will have decided for you and leave you standing there—dishonest.

Or, once more, let your imagination reach out to the most stupendous problem in the world today, the avoidance of war. Some people think we have three choices, either to make a united stand in favour of disarmament to save the world from this intolerable burden of taxation for war that is breaking the back of our civilisation; or to refuse to do that and plunge deliberately into huge competition in armament in preparation for another war; or to be indecisive, to dally and defer, to procrastinate, put off. But as a matter of fact we have only two decisions. The processes

of life are not waiting—God pity us!—for us to make up our minds. We are like ships upon a sea where to drift means wreck as certainly as though with fell deliberation we steered towards the rocks.

A little more indecisiveness, uncertainty, procrastination, a little more folding of the hands and crying, "To-morrow," and it shall be decided. We shall have another war.

In the same class with those illustrative instances lies that question on which Felix tried to postpone decision, the question of a righteous, self-controlled and Christian life. For see this one element that runs through all these illustrative cases. To make flowers grow means positive decision; to help starving Chinese means a deliberate action; to be honest in a crisis means a thrust of will; to move towards disarmament means a resolute act of the public conscience. All great things cause positive decision. You cannot float into them like thistledown blowing in the wind. You cannot become a Christian in your sleep. You must make up your mind to it. And if Felix endeavours to be indecisive, he is not really indecisive. His life's processes still go on without Christ because he has not positively decided for Christ.

No earnest minister could speak on such a theme without thinking of the young men and women here who, it may be, have been in attendance on these mornings' services all this winter past, and now as school or college closes, go to their homes, or, it may be, begin their business or professional careers. I speak to some of you as though I might never have the chance to speak

to you again. No one would urge you to choose something which you do not understand or that you do not believe. But if you have caught at all the emphasis of this pulpit you must see how little we care here about those sectarian peccadillos that have marred the Church, and the theological peculiarities that have disfigured her serious thought; you must have seen how earnestly we have pressed our emphasis back to that central matter, the spirit of Jesus, His filial life with God, His brotherly life with men, His sacrificial passion for the coming of the kingdom of righteousness upon the earth, for the faith that empowered Him, the hope that sustained Him, the character that was His crown and glory. You haven't three choices about that. You may have two choices. You may glorify your life if you will by having Him for the Master of your soul. But if you try to be indecisive, you are not decisive; you are missing Him; you are missing Him as though you had said, "No" to Him. For you will go out to live a life not mastered by His positive faiths, not dedicated to His positive cause.

As one thinks of this refusal through procrastination, he sees how many men are living in just this attitude. For there are multitudes of people to whose hearts the highest impulses are not strange at all, who again and again have risen to the appeal of Jesus like waves that almost come to their crest, but not quite; they never break into the white foam of a finished billow; but they rise and sink, rise and sink, forever moving, but moving nowhere, forever promising, but never consummating. How futile is a life

like that in any realm! In literature Coleridge was the consummate example of procrastination. He projected more poems than any other man that ever lived; but he finished almost nothing, a few things like *The Ancient Mariner* but not much else besides. He planned everything, but he postponed work on anything. You pick up a page and read:—

> "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree,
> Where Alph, the sacred river ran,
> Through caverns measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea."

You say, "This is fascinating." But the trouble of it is, he never finished it. It was a passing impulse. He never made up his mind to write it through. He was an animated prospectus, full of deferred plans.

But there are many of us who have no business to laugh at him. In a far more deep and important matter than writing poems we are living that kind of life. Again and again we have felt the appeal of Christ. Again and again we have felt the lure of the open, decisive, consistent Christian life in a generation when open, decisive, and consistent Christian lives are more needed than anything else; but we are still uncertain, irresolute, procrastinating. I wish there were one here this morning who could cease the refusal of the Highest through procrastination, who would say, "As for me, now, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Just once more pick up these words of Felix and look at them. "A convenient season," he

says politely and cheerfully to Paul as he bids him good-night, and you perceive at once that he confidently thinks there will be a convenient season. He has not deeply perceived that serious truth which runs through all human life, that there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination a small fault? No, not in a universe where some things have to be done on time if they are going to be done at all. Says the tree in April, "I will not put forth my leaves now—in May"; and in May the tree says, "A more convenient season—June." But it would better take care. If leaves are not forthcoming in April or May or June it is getting late. July is no time for leaves to come and August is almost hopeless, and September is quite too late. He must have blind eyes who cannot see that truth running all through human life, a serious truth to which no cheap and easy optimism ought ever to blind our sight.

The truth is inherent in the very fact of growing up from youth to age. What a fairy-land of possibilities youth is! Listen to this lad talking. He is not sure, he says, yet, whether he is to be a civil engineer or a lawyer or a business man or a professional aviator; and he thinks he might be a minister. And when he talks to you like that, what is more, you must listen to him seriously. He may be any one of them. The doors are all open. He is young. But we who have reached maturity have all these years been listening to a sound with which we are perfectly familiar, the sound of shutting doors. The range of our possible choices has been narrowing down. We know well enough that there are some things

on this earth we never can do now. It is too late. Happy the man who has chosen right. Happy the man who has not put off too long doing something that he wanted to do very much indeed.

Alongside this fact of the inevitable passage of the years the possibility of being too late is accentuated by the companion fact of habit. There may have been a time when you could straighten out the down-town streets of Boston, when they were meandering cow-paths along the shores of Massachusetts Bay, but it is too late now. They have been widened into streets, and set in asphalt, and curbed into stone; and the life of the metropolis has immovably solidified itself around them. It is too late. So is the set of habit in the life of man.

It is no small matter, then, to say to young men and women in their fluid years of choice that they would better make the decision that concerns the deep interests of their spiritual life. For Felix is no ancient character alone. He has had a multitude of reincarnations. Edgar Allan Poe was another Felix. He died as a result of a drunken night's revel in a saloon in Baltimore. You say he was bad? A man cannot content himself in speaking of such a man by saying, "He is bad." Look upon that brutal drunken death and think of what he wrote:—

"For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee,
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

Surely, men who write like that are not all bad. There are harbours in the world where the harbour bar is so high that it can never be passed at low tide: so the ships wait for the high tide that they may enter in. So are the souls of men. Think of the flood-tides then that a man like Edgar Allan Poe must have had when the sky called to the deep, and in his heart there were voices speaking, like Paul before Felix, about righteousness and self-control and judgment to come. But he would not decide! Up and down, up and down, outside the harbour bar he sailed his craft, irresolute, procrastinating, till the tide went out, and then it was too late.

And this possibility of being too late is, of course, accentuated, so far as this earth is concerned, by death. I do not know whether that impresses the more when I think of my own death or when I think of the death of my friends. For, when death comes, it comes very suddenly. Ah, if you have anybody to love, you would better love him now. If you have little children to be brought up in the spirit of Jesus, you would better do it now. If you have quarrelled with some one with whom in your deepest heart you did not mean to quarrel, you would better make it up right now. If you have any contribution that you can make to build here a juster, kindlier world for our humanity, you would better make it now. And, if you know a Lord whose service is freedom, a Saviour, whose love is wider than the measure of man's mind, you would better choose Him now.

My young friends, there are three great choices that a man makes in his experience: first, his

vocation, what he will do with his life; second, his marriage, who will be the mother of his children; and third, his faith, who shall be the guide of his soul. I think you know that Jesus Christ has a right to that place. Then put Him there—not to-morrow—to-day.

PRAYER

Eternal God, our Father, who has given unto us the great gift of hope, help us not to spoil ourselves by Thy benefaction, and grant that no longer in futile expectation may we put off the thing that now lies within our power to do. Speak Thou, O Spirit of the Living God, to some heart here, and say: "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation."—Amen.

Chapter VI

DO WE REALLY NEED RELIGION?

By

A. HERBERT GRAY, D.D.

INTRODUCTION

The Editor has asked me to contribute to this volume an evangelistic address, and to write this short introductory note as a preface.

I have never found the presentation of the Christian message either a simple or an easy thing. I know of no verse in the New Testament which sums it up adequately. I cannot symbolise Christian truth to myself as a circle with but one centre. At least, it would require an ellipse with its two foci to represent it. Until both the spiritual secret and the ethical content of our religion have been presented to the mind the essential work of an evangelist has hardly been begun. If I had to choose two texts as the foundations for my work I would select "Without Me ye can do nothing," and "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

But in practice the task of an evangelist is much more complex than any such statement would suggest. Human beings are of so many varied types that Christian truth must be presented from a great many different angles if men and women are to be helped to find their God and their life.

Ultimately everything depends both for religion and for life on the truth about God, and it is often the best and truest way for a Christian preacher or teacher to attempt to set forth the truth about God as He is seen in Jesus.

Yet while it must always be his ultimate aim to help others to know God through Christ, there are many people who at first are not in a position to respond to that method of approach. I have known men and women who made their first steps towards full Christian living under such very different forms of stimulus that I feel an evangelist would need to be a man of almost indefinitely adaptable nature, who by sympathetic contact with people of many sorts had learnt to suit himself to minds and temperaments of great variety. Some are won by the attraction of the man Christ Jesus. Some are first awakened to eager interest when they realise the full social and international significance of His religion. Some find that the Cross in Calvary says such things to them as they can hardly put into words but which none the less change life. Some rejoice with unspeakable joy when they first see God through Jesus. Some are driven by the stresses that arise through sin. Some are won by the comfort which Christ alone can offer. Some are first arrested because Jesus answers their eager questions about the life to come. And so one might go on. Only those who have known many of their fellow-men and women by talking with them about the vital issues of life can have any notion of the magnificence and splendour of the Creator who never repeats Himself as He produces new spirits. Nor can any one else ever realise fully the marvel of Jesus of

Nazareth, who in one way or another meets the needs of all varieties of humanity.

I do *not* offer the address which follows as a sample of what I conceive to be the right way of preaching the gospel. A man may only say what he knows and, therefore, no one man can fully preach the gospel. But even my experience has taught me to attempt many and varied ways of approach to the human souls I have met in my work.

Many people, however, at all events profess to be uninterested in religion. Many declare that they cannot see that it has any vital importance for real life. Many insist that its truths make no real appeal to their natures. Therefore, I offer the following address as an indication of one way in which I have tried to approach such people.

DO WE REALLY NEED RELIGION?

(An Address to Young Men and Women)

I constantly meet people who seem to believe that the answer to this question is No. At least, they are eager to give that answer in words. Some of them will go on to say that they are not interested in theological questions, that they are not attracted by church services, and that they dislike the society of ordinary religious people. Often they go further and have much to say about the scandal of the quarrels between churches, and about the hypocrites and double dealers who attend churches. They will add that religion is all right for those who like that sort of thing, but

that for their part they find they can get on all right without it.

Now I am not going to ask you to listen to any discussion of theological questions, and I have nothing to say in the meantime about churches. I suggest that we leave these things alone for the present. What I want you to do is to think with me about certain unalterable and deep-seated facts about our life and our natures; for, frankly, I do not believe that any of you are getting on all right without religion.

1. I suppose I may assume that you all want to make a good thing of life and even, if possible, a great thing. You want to achieve real self-development and to find some way of self-expression, so that your life shall have meaning and worth. At those times when we are most truly our real selves that desire is most clear and strong. It may even be called one of the primary instinctive desires of all healthy people.

Now, I expect that you are already taking care of your physical development. Probably you take regular exercise and look after your bodies with some care. I am very sorry if you don't: for if you neglect these things you are handicapping yourselves in a way which will hamper all your after life.

Then probably you are doing something about your mental development. You do some studying. You read and think. You are learning to follow some calling. You are becoming efficient in the use of your minds in some direction or other.

And all that is very good. But, if that is all, you are going to be after all only a lop-sided sort of person, because body and mind do not

make up your whole personality. There is a mysterious third side to you called your spiritual nature. It is because of that nature that you have at times strange subtle longings after the unseen and the infinite. It is because of that nature that you sometimes know that the things which can be seen and handled are not enough for you. The simplest way of expressing that fact is by saying that deep down in you you have a capacity for knowing and loving God, and that till that capacity is satisfied you will never be at rest. You may not as a rule be conscious of this desire. Though it comes to you at times you can suppress it and go on caring only for the things of sense—perhaps for weeks or even months. But it always returns; and at times we turn almost with disgust from all the ordinary contents of life. They may be good in many ways, but in moments of insight our verdict about them is that they are "not good enough."

I remember a man at the front whose case interested me intensely. He was about forty-five years old, and before the war had risen, because of his great abilities, to the top of his profession. Men pronounced him a success—a man who had arrived. Yet one day in the Somme he told me that he was glad the war had broken out because it had enabled him to draw a line across his life and begin again. I asked him why he wanted to begin again, and he told me that he had got tired of life—had exhausted the interest of it, and was weary. Yet men held him a success. I have met before and since scores of men in his case. They set out at the beginning to achieve certain definite things, *and they succeed.* By forty or forty-

five they have got a position in the world, and a sufficient income. They have pretty houses and attractive families. They have motor cars, or the means to pursue other hobbies. They belong to clubs. And then remorselessly the conviction forces itself upon them that all these things which they have attained at such a cost in labour are "not good enough." They are left still unhappy, or, at least, still unsatisfied. The warmth and colour have gone out of life. The thrilling experiences of youth return no more, and the round of familiar people and places, occupations and amusements, bore them.

That is one of life's most critical turning points. A comparatively few at that point take to vice to try to put some vivid colour into life again. A great many more settle down to endure boredom, and so to become bores, while the articulate few are heard declaring that human life is essentially a fraud that leads to disillusionment and ennui. "We were born," they declare, "with certain strong and natural instincts, and we followed them. We set out to win the things which appealed to our natures, and lo, in the very hour of success our satisfaction was snatched from us. We found out we had been pursuing vanities. We have been tricked by life and fate." That is how the cynics are made. From Solomon onwards thousands have walked along that road, only to be found at the end murmuring, "Vanity of vanities."

But the case of all these men does NOT prove that life is a fraud. It only proves that man is a far greater being than these men knew. There is really something splendid about the magnifi-

cent audacity with which men declare that all the visible contents of the world are not enough for them. Though they do not know it, they are registering the fact that they do not in the last analysis really belong to this world. For the truth is that all the sights and sounds of the world leave a man hungry just because he was made for God, and without his God remains a stranger to his peace. These disillusioned men I have spoken of made the profound mistake of not taking a true account of themselves. They achieved only a lop-sided development; and so when the first early zest of life had exhausted itself they were left lamenting. Because they have found no spiritual peace, they can have no peace at all. Life need not end in cries about vanity, but those who would escape that fate must aim at something greater than any amount of what is called worldly success. What man needs to find is the secret of what Kipling calls "a soul unbroken when the body tires." Otherwise life is indeed a failure.

And thousands have found it. Thousands have discovered a secret whereby their strength is renewed from year to year, so that life takes on more meaning and more interest every season. Thousands go about with the signs of a deep inward peace in their very eyes. There is no inward ferment in their beings. They have found some secret of reconciliation with the world, with life, with other people and with themselves. And they have found all that because they have found the secret of reconciliation with God.

Nor do they despise life because they have

found God. On the contrary all things seem to turn good to them. The sunshine is more brilliant, flowers are more lovely, people are more attractive, wit is keener, love itself is more wonderful, once they have learnt to experience all these things against the background of God. They do not have a religious life AND another life. They have one harmonious and deeply happy life filled with the sense of His presence.

And if you ask me why I tell you who are young this long story about the troubles of middle age, the answer is that all these men who have experienced disillusionment made their first mistaken steps in life at your age. They set their courses wrongly while they were still in the twenties. And now it is very hard for them to awaken to the sense of God. Their spiritual capacities by long disuse have become dull and lifeless. Though their need for God may at last become very plain to them, it is very hard for them to find HIM.

It is you who stand at the period of opportunity. It is you whose spiritual capacities still have vigour and sensitiveness. Now is the time to remember your Creator—long before the evil days come when your wearied heart might be heard saying, "I have no pleasure in them."

Yes, that is the first reason why we need religion—because we were made for God, and must eventually be miserable and hungry without Him.

2. But now let me offer you another answer to my question.

I practically never meet healthy and normal people of whom it is not true that they want to make a worthy thing of life. They want to be-

come true, upright, clean-living, useful men and women. In plain English they want to be good. One of the things which no preacher need bother to try to do is to prove that goodness is a better thing than folly and vice. "We all know that" is what ordinary people would say. Therefore I assume that you want to live fine lives and acquire true characters.

Now do let us be honest and frank about this business. I ask you bluntly, "How are you getting on with this business of being good?" Of course, you are living respectable decent lives like most other people. But that is not the question. How are you getting on in the matter of carrying out your own resolutions and living up to your own ideals? You recognise that you ought to be unselfish at home. Are you unselfish at home? You despise jealousy. But have you overcome jealousy in yourself? Some of you have tempers. How are you getting on in the matter of controlling those tempers? Some of you have an inborn tendency to slackness and sloth. Have you mastered that inborn tendency? Your best self loathes deceit. But have you banished deceit from your life? You despise cowardice. But do you never do wrong simply out of fear? Purity is part of your ideal. But do you find a pure life easy? Or have you, like so very many, certain hidden shames in your life? How do things stand with you compared with this time last year? You meant to be far on in the matter of learning goodness. But what as a matter of fact has happened?

Is it not the fact that you often still do the evil

you meant never to do again, and that much of the good you had planned remains to this day undone? Now, is not that a very humiliating position? That we should be unable to carry out our own good resolves—that we should be beaten again and again by evils which we despise—that we should not be the masters and mistresses of our own lives—that we should be inwardly ashamed and disgusted because of our own record up to date—that seems to me the central humiliation of human life. If there is no escape from that debasing condition, then I for one have something stronger to say about life than that it is a vanity. I should call it on those terms a sheer torment. Well might Paul call himself a wretched man, and declare he was tied to a body of death. To have fine and beautiful moral aspirations such as you all have, and to be condemned none the less to live stained and petty lives—what could be worse? And it is because they have found no way of escape from that humiliation that there is so much deep-seated unhappiness in human beings. They once tried and failed. They have now accepted failure, and tried to get accustomed to it. But something goes on protesting all the time against the failure, so that life holds no peace.

Of course, such people deny what I am saying. Of course, they protest they are not bothering about it. That is part of their defensive armour. That is how they try to deceive themselves into some sort of satisfaction with life. But at times the truth declares itself. The God who lives in every man does not die; and because

of the unsilenced protest of the best part of himself the man who continues to be defeated by his sins remains a sad man.

Now it is the very central claim of the Christian religion that it brings to us a secret whereby we can escape from this besetting humiliation in life. The same man who once cried, "Oh, wretched man that I am," lived to be able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

By surrendering himself to Christ, he entered on an experience of God after which the power of God became available for him, and lifted him on to a new level of living. Or, put differently, the inspiration he drew from knowing God through Christ did actually deliver him from his wretched state. He declared that in a sense he no longer lived his own life—so clearly did he realise that the power of God was working in and through him. On the wings, as it were, of a new inspiration he was carried past the temptations which formerly had laid him low. His life was so filled with happy and positive aspirations that there was no longer any room in it for low desire.

And what St. Paul found in his experience has been found by a great multitude since his day. Thousands of them are alive now. In varying forms of words they have the same story to tell. From the day when they surrendered themselves to Christ life has taken on a new character. They have not all been made victorious all at once. Indeed, all of them find that temptation does not accept defeat once for all, and that ever and again they are called to fight. But they fight in a strength that is not their own, and are made

conquerors. Suddenly with some—gradually with most—the old desires die away, the old ambitions wither, strength takes the place of weakness, patience is born even in impatient hearts, humility is given to those who once were proud, courage is bestowed on many who once simply gave way before sorrow, and so life becomes victorious. They live new lives "through Christ."

Now in saying these things to you I am not expounding a theory. I am recording a fact. These things are as fully and clearly proved as the law of gravitation. It is an established certainty that through Christ this power of victory is to be had. There was nothing unique about St. Paul. He was very emphatically a man of like passions with us. He was no moral genius. He was not even one of those rare souls whom we sometimes meet, and about whom we feel inclined to say that they were born good. He had known what sin and defeat are. And with most of the others who now offer us the same testimony the same things were true. Some of them had been sensualists. Some had been restless pleasure-seekers. Some had once ugly tendencies such as jealousy or conceit or violent temper. Many were people who just felt that they had not sufficient energy for the good life. Many more were the pitiful victims of recurring moods of depression, which spoilt the quality of their lives. Oh, yes, they were just like us. And through Christ they entered on a new quality of life. Through Christ they became able to accomplish great things.

In view of that fact can any of you still honestly say that you do not need religion? Would

it really be honest to say so? You may have felt hitherto that you do not LIKE religion; and if so that is certainly because you have got wrong impressions about it. But if religion contains the secret of becoming what in our best moments we want to be, can ANY of US truthfully say that we do not need it?

And now if you ask me how this religion is to be made ours—if you raise the question how can any one enter on the sort of experience St. Paul had, I have no single dogmatic answer to offer you. The ways which lead to God are very many, and wonderfully varied. Just as every soul is an original creation of God's, so, perhaps, the spiritual experience of each soul is unique. There is always a certain mystery about the matter when a soul is found of God. The experience has something in it which suggests the wind, which we can hear but cannot explain. Certainly no two souls ever have quite the same experience. Some get home like storm-tossed souls, driven for shelter to their Father's home. Some seem to find Him naturally and easily, and to cling to Him by spontaneous affinity. Some are constrained by the consequences of their own sin, and others seem to be won by the beauty of His holiness. Much experience has taught me that I MUST NOT dogmatise about the ways of finding God.

But at least for a great many of us this is true—that we shall not find Him or be found of Him until we have faced the humiliation of admitting that without Him we are failing. Most of us fight hard to keep up pretences with ourselves. To face and admit the facts would be so painful that we prefer to deceive ourselves. And

so we hold God at a distance. We would like to believe that we ARE sufficient in ourselves. We would like to escape admitting that again and again we have done despicable things. We shun the valley of our humiliation. And, of course, on those terms we can have no experience of the saving power of God.

But are you not getting tired of that plan? It has left you in your present condition—inwardly without rest, dissatisfied and, in the deepest sense, unsuccessful. I ask again are you not getting tired of that condition? It is a fatiguing thing holding out against God. Are you not weary?

You can end all that phase of life by simply and bravely turning to God and admitting to Him your utter need. You will have to stand in the full light of truth, and the truth is that you are a sinner. Yes, it is just that old hated word that expresses the truth. It hurts to use it about ourselves. And yet it is just sin that is wrong with us. And Christ saves His disciples from their sins. Is that not a compelling reason why you should turn to Him and, admitting your need, offer Him your surrender? He is waiting to accept you as a disciple. There is a place for you in the circle of those whom He loves, who are saved by His love. Why do you wait before taking that place? Why do you continue to be humiliated by defeat when you might be made a conqueror?

Chapter VII

HOW CHRIST CAN ENRICH YOUR LIFE

By

J. CHALMERS LYON

INTRODUCTION

Both in my missions and in my regular ministry I have ever sought to present the gospel as something intensely real and practical, something that works. And no wonder it works, for it is *the power of God,* and there's no other power like that. And thank God, it is the power of God *unto salvation.* Now salvation means the deliverance by that power from powers of another kind, *e.g.,* the power of evil habit and of evil thought. It means a new and holy life instead of the old life of selfishness and uncleanliness, ay, and positive harmfulness, for my own sin makes other folk sin. Bad men make other men bad. How often is it repeated, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin! Now, God's cure for the world's evil is this gospel, and the heart of the gospel and the whole of the gospel is Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus means Saviour. That is the name he deserves. (See Matt. i. 18.) In the following address I am specially speaking of the gospel as deliverance from what St. Paul calls, "Your vain conversation," or more literally and intelligibly, "Your empty life!" The empty life—empty of

God, empty of holiness, of hopefulness, of inward peace and outward service. I am not just piling up pious phrases. I speak what I know in my own experience and testify what I have seen in other people. I have a little explored the unsearchable riches of Christ, and I have known many and many a life unspeakably enriched by the incoming of Christ. Perhaps the most useful parts of such an address as is here reprinted are omitted. For I would not dream of delivering it in an evangelistic service without giving instances by way of illustrations. I think of two men, one a Lancashire miner whom I knew. What a change Christ wrought in that life! From being a rough, ignorant, drunken sot he became a little child in the family of our Father. He learned to read, and he read his Bible through scores of times. He taught himself Greek and Hebrew to read it in the original tongues, and from his Bible classes many a young man went forth into the service of God. At least eighteen became ministers of the gospel. I knew another man of different birth—a peer of the realm—a man of violent passions, a gambler and a cruel brute. What a change when Christ came in! How that life was enriched and ennobled and what a blessing his testimony became to many. For this gospel is of universal application! It is freely offered unto all and its power is seen "upon all them that believe."

After such an address I would invite all who would to accept some simply-worded Decision Card, *e.g.*, "I am resolved gratefully to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour."—Signature .....; or, to remain afterwards for personal talk. The personal talk will gen-

erally be found far more difficult for the preacher than was the address. But its value cannot be overestimated.

To myself and to my brothers in the ministry I would say finally, that if with our lips we declare all the judgments of His mouth, if His word is nigh us even in our mouth and heart, and if we seek to deliver that word in the power of the Holy Ghost it is bound to do its work in some hearts and prove its inherent power unto salvation even when we are most conscious of our own inefficiency and burdened with sense of failure. So carry on! "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, and the isles are waiting for his law." Wherefore in God's strength "make full proof of thy ministry, do the work of an Evangelist!"

HOW CHRIST CAN ENRICH YOUR LIFE

John Ruskin must have startled his Manchester working-class audience when he began an art lecture by expressing his just and wholesome contempt for poverty, and his profound respect for wealth. His hearers doubtless breathed a little more easily when he added, "True wealth, that is to say: for, of course, we ought to respect neither wealth nor anything else that is false of its kind"; * and then he rambled on in that easy intimate fashion, which always lent charm to his talk. A greater than John Ruskin spoke once about "the true riches," and I want to commend to you His teaching on that subject. For I have found that the Lord Jesus Christ knows how to enrich life by putting us in possession of what—

* *See* "A Joy for Ever," Lecture 1.

in a far deeper sense than Ruskin's—He calls "the true riches." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8, 9).

I

"He was rich." No commentator, no preacher, not Paul himself could fully explain that. The words lift us away from Earth to Heaven, from Time to Eternity, into the presence of the Triune God, to those celestial regions, where before creation, the Son of God, holiest among the mighty and mightiest among the holy, is seen in His pre-incarnate glory and deity. And He was rich: rich in the wisdom and might by which He created all things: rich in blessedness: rich in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was made. Beyond all conception of human thought or expression in human speech He was rich. Then in the light of these things let us look at the next words if we would know what Paul means by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—"He became poor."

II

There is the story of the Incarnation put into three words, *"He became poor."* And how poor? "Equal with God . . . He emptied Himself" (Phil. ii. 6, 7). He became so poor that the poorest on earth was richer than One Who had not where to lay His head. The world was His; He came unto His own. But He laid aside all

and came where He possessed nothing, and where He experienced poverty and cold and hunger and weariness, and other things worse than any or all of these.

1. *He became poor. He laid aside His Omnipotence.* Creator of all, He became in all things like one of His creatures. In olden times rough shelters were sometimes built by lonely roadsides and left untenanted that any traveller overtaken by the night and far from the cheerful warmth of the inn fire might, at least, find some protection from the wind and rain. These were called "Cold Harbours," or "Cold Cots." The world was, indeed, a cold harbour to Him. His birthplace, an inn yard; His cradle, a manger; His home, the humble cottage of a citizen in a provincial village; His lot, one long struggle with poverty. He became poor in His friends. It looked like a bad bargain when He exchanged the goodly fellowship of the heavenly hosts for the small circle of sinful human beings—so frail, so fickle, so slow of understanding, so ready to misinterpret and misjudge, so forward with plans that were mean and impossible, with advice that was foolish and impertinent. Well, the writer of "Hebrews" in that wonderful second chapter, says there is some Divine necessity in all this. "In all things *it behoved Him* to be made like unto His brethren." So Omnipotence *had* to be laid aside, for man's redemption had to be wrought out on the human plane. It is as MAN He meets the Devil. "*Man* shall not live by bread alone." By Man came death; by Man came Resurrection.

2. *He became poor. He laid aside His glory.*

"Mild, He laid His glory by." That is especially true so far as "glory" refers to the inconceivable majesty and beauty of His outward form. That was all laid aside. He had no form or comeliness, no beauty that we should desire Him. It was not the external appearance of our Lord that first attracted. His glory was shaded when on earth save for one brief unveiling on the Mount of Transfiguration when from Him the Shekinah blazed forth. But when John said, "We beheld His glory," I don't think he had in mind the Transfiguration. The unique glory of His stainless character was never laid aside, not even shaded for one instant of time. In Him was no sin. He did always the things that pleased God.

3. *He became poor. He laid aside His Omniscience* and conformed to all the hard conditions of acquiring knowledge incident to humanity. As a child He had to grow in knowledge like other children, had to learn His alphabet, a few rules of arithmetic, facts of geography and history, even as the other boys in the Synagogue school at Nazareth. He had to learn His trade like any other carpenter's apprentice, and as Joseph is generally thought to have died when Jesus was a youth the heavy responsibility of maintaining the home would devolve upon His shoulders, and He had to learn business habits like other folks. Do let us accept the Scripture record and beware of any unreality here. The Docetic heresy, that Christ only *seemed* human is not merely false, it's contemptible. It makes our Lord's incarnation a mere pretence, His humanity a mere masquerade. "In *all things* He was made like unto His brethren." I know that some would here-

upon assert that if His Omniscience be laid aside then He was liable to ignorance and error and, therefore, His teaching is in no sense final and authoritative. A word on this vital point. Had His teaching been given forth in the days of His immaturity when He was growing in knowledge, and had it been the product of His voluntarily limited powers that suggestion might have some shadow of justification. But we must remember two things, the thirty years of silence and preparation, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him in His baptism when the silence was about to be broken and the preparation was complete. God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him. All His days had been lived in God's fellowship, but now He was so measurelessly filled and possessed by the Spirit of God that He could say, "The words that I say unto you I speak *not of myself,* but the Father abiding in me doeth His works!" (John xiv. 10). "I do *nothing of myself,* but as the Father taught me I speak these things" (John viii. 29). "I speak not from myself; but the Father that sent me, He hath given me a commandment, what I should say unto you" (John xii. 49). "My teaching is *not mine,* but Him that sent me" (John vii. 16). And there are other like passages. No wonder even His foes said, "Never man spake like this man!" He whom God sent spoke the words of God, and unhesitatingly, unquestioningly this teaching must be regarded as final, authoritative and worthy of all acceptation.

4. *He became poor. He laid aside His Immortality.* As God He is Immortal. The angels are immortal. The redeemed in glory are immortal,

and equal unto the angels. But in taking a human frame He was made lower than the angels. And the writer to the "Hebrews" very clearly states that He was made for a little lower than the angels in order that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. That was one of the purposes of the Incarnation.

"Yea, once Immanual's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'
It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation.
That of the lost, no son should use these words of desolation." *

His own testimony is clear as crystal. "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many."

That is not the whole story. The great work of redemption cannot be put into a single sentence. He came to reveal God, to destroy the works of the Devil, to establish the Kingdom of God. But remember, without the Incarnation and Death nothing in the way of salvation were possible for us men. "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." Therefore, He became poor, poor indeed in His birth, throughout His life, and at the last betrayed, forsaken, denied, subject to every form of cruelty and insult. Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha crown with their awful and tragic exegesis the words, "He became poor."

I cannot tell *how* He thus laid everything aside and "Emptied Himself of all but love!" 'Tis mystery all—part of the hidden counsels of God.

* Mrs. Browning, *Cowper's Grave.*

"School thy lips to say I do not know," said the old-time schoolmen. This we do know that there was no other way of achieving the desire of His heart. His ways are not our ways. Ours would have been very different. "If Thou be the Son of God then so come into the world as to demonstrate Thy Deity in fashion unmistakable. If Thou be the Son of God unveil Thy Glory, strike dumb Thy foes, put them in terror to utter confusion!" That would perhaps have been our way. That would certainly be the Devil's way. "Cast Thyself down from the temple pinnacle: descend among the waiting worshippers. Let the Lord they seek come suddenly to His temple. Then all will believe"; and perhaps they would. But obviously a belief compelled by such demonstrations would have no moral value whatever. Fear and amazement and demonstrations of power are not among the primary regenerative forces. They occupy a very minor position in God's redemptive plans. "Through the greatness of Thy power Thine enemies shall yield a *feigned obedience* unto Thee" (Ps. 66). That is all that even God's power can do—extract an imitation obedience. Real obedience can only be awakened in grateful, trustful, loving hearts. And only *love* can do that. "If ye love Me ye will keep My commandments." The real omnipotence of God is His love. That's the power on which He relies. Hence the Cross. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son!" That's the gospel, the power of God unto salvation.

III

But if I cannot tell how He became poor I can, with adoring gratitude, tell WHY. It was *"For your sakes . . . that ye through His poverty might become rich."* Do let us be clear about this. There's nothing desirable or specially meritorious about mere poverty. And I need not say that with our Lord His choice of poverty was no heroic pose, no whim, no affectation of humility. I couldn't say that about some others who have chosen poverty. Diogenes in his tub was as proud as Lucifer. You remember him snatching Plato's beautiful robe and trampling it in the mire with "Thus I trample upon the pride of Plato." "And with another kind of pride," added Plato quietly. Our Lord never flaunted His poverty; rarely referred to it except perhaps to warn off sentimentalists who would have joined Him without realising the conditions or counting the cost. No, Christ didn't make poverty His bride. He simply doesn't talk of it either in boast or complaint. His great concern is to reach men, men of all classes, so He came among the poorest that He might be accessible to all. But He did talk about riches—the false riches that were so often a hindrance to candidates for the Kingdom: and the true riches by which He longs to enrich the souls of men. And some who knew Him best tell of the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and assure us that "the same Lord over all is rich unto them that call upon Him." Preachers of the gospel are poor yet making many rich. They tell of the riches of His glory, the riches of His wisdom, the riches of His goodness, the exceeding

riches of His grace. Now what about it? Has He enriched *you* "That ye through His poverty might become rich." I ask again, how stands the case with you? Seventy years after His ascension to glory the Lord said unto the Church at Smyrna, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich": while to Laodicea He says, "Thou sayest I am rich, . . . and knowest not that thou art poor?" But He also adds, "Thou mayest become rich." Which of these words is He saying to you to-day? Is it, "Thou art rich"? Or is it, "Thou art poor, but thou mayest become rich?"

My brothers, unless we know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and Friend, unless we possess the riches He provides we are poor indeed. Now what are those riches? I can tell you one or two. I cannot tell you all. Life here and eternity hereafter will be needed to explore His riches which are inexhaustible and unsearchable.

1. First, *He enriches us with an adequate idea of God.* And isn't that the first thing we need? I think it was Huxley who said the one question above all others to which he longed for an answer was, "Is the universe friendly?" He wanted to know what we all want to know, "What is God really like?" Not in form, or mode of existence —but in character. To such a question the world has no answer. It knows not God. The world by its wisdom knows not God. "Eye hath not seen"—our observations will not discover Him; it can suggest much but affirm little. The world by its philosophies knows not God. "Ear hath not heard"—discussion, tradition cannot enlighten us. We can only "guess and fear!" And the world by its imagination knows not God. The

heart cannot conceive Him. The world by its science knows not God. The French astronomer laughs at the idea of a God whom he cannot see through his telescope. The world by its religion knows not God. Buddhism denies God. Confucianism ignores God. Mahommedanism degrades God. (Let Armenia's age-long agonies shed their lurid light on this vile travesty of religion.) Pantheism confuses the very idea of God. Polytheism knows nothing of "the only God." Agnosticism worships before a mark of interrogation.

But Jesus reveals God. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (*exegesato*) (John i. 18). And how has this exegesis or revelation been made? Listen: "If ye had known Me ye would have known My Father. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father in Me. I and the Father are one!" Do read that whole passage again (John xiv. 6-11).

Do you know Jesus? Do you know what manner of man He was? Holy, just, considerate, absolutely true, absolutely trustworthy, eager to help, to bless, to heal, to save. That is Jesus and that is God. That is "Our Father which art in Heaven." For me the word "God" has little meaning apart from the word "Jesus." Now isn't that an enrichment worth possessing? It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. And further, He not only shows us what God is: *He shows us what we are.* In this light we get light to see ourselves. And it is none too

flattering a sight either. I know that to-day the whole idea of sin and human responsibility is being called into question. For instance, I have repeatedly heard the strangely silly phrase, "I never asked to be born," or "I was never consulted whether I wished to exist," put forth as a reason for denying all responsibility towards our Creator—How the Creator was to consult us about our existence before we existed is left unexplained! How *could* you ask to be born before there was any "you" to ask? But being born and being here and having all our priceless faculties—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—let us ask, "Why am I here?" "Am I fulfilling the purpose God had in view when He placed me here?" And once again the Lord Jesus alone gives the adequate answer. We know perfectly well the meaning of right and wrong. Conscience —which just means consciousness—knowledge of what's what—is part of the normal human outfit. And conscience has "told us off" many a time. And conscience has been stilled many a time. Its voice can become muffled and our spiritual ear dull of hearing. Jesus is the great Awakener of Conscience. He is the means by which God's convicting Spirit cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light." I know what I say. I have seen consciences seared as with a hot iron become active and alert under the blessed awakening ministry of the Holy Ghost, as He takes the things of Christ and shows them to the soul.

For the purity of Christ shows up our vileness, the truthfulness of Christ rebukes all deceits and shams, and His gracious winsome ways of deal-

ing with us sinners, shame us into contrition and confession, till we are ready with Peter to cry, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

3. But even yet we are only at the beginning of things. Our Saviour not only enriches us as the Light of the world, revealing God and revealing ourselves. He is also the Lamb of God that *beareth away the sins of the world.* Let me quote some words of R. W. Dale, of Birmingham: a passage well worthy of being laid to heart in these days. "I am weary of listening to fervent and rhetorical declamation, perfectly sincere and beautiful as it often is, on the incidental benefit conferred upon the world by Christianity. It is true that by the Christian faith barbarous races have been civilised, and the morality of Christian nations made more pure and more robust. It is true that this faith has been the inspiration of great poets and great artists: that it has stimulated and exalted the intellectual life of Europe: that it has been the spring of a thousand fair and gracious charities: that it has taught men to relieve the poor, to care for the sick, to reclaim the outcast and to vindicate the rights of the oppressed. It is true that it gives a more urgent authority to human laws, and the surest defence to the stability of nations. But the great work that Christ came to do is too often forgotten, namely, 'To die the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.' The mightiest empires are destined to decay, and all their intellectual glories, all the triumphs of their literature and art will perish too. The miseries of human life are but imperfectly alleviated in the wisest and

most generous charity or the most just and gracious legislation. But the restoration of man to God is an immortal work—it will endure when the heavens and earth have passed away. And as it is the most enduring it is infinitely more glorious than any of the benefits which God Himself can confer upon the temporary life of man. To be restored to Him through faith in the Son is the crown of our blessings and a crown that fadeth not away." And you know that crown is freely offered to you. I wonder if you have, indeed, beheld the Lamb of God? Have you looked away from yourself to Him for salvation from sin's guilt and power? Have you? If not, do it now as you hear these words. "As many as received Him to them gave He the right to become the Sons of God, even as many as believed in His name."

4. And furthermore. "This is *He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.*" What an expressible enrichment of the life that is! The Baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is the crown and completion of the work of Christ. That, says Paul, is really the blessing promised long ago to Abraham and his seed, and through them it is for the whole world. "It shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, "that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh . . . that *the blessing of Abraham* might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, *that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith*" (Gal. iii. 13, 14). The work of the Holy Spirit is to make us holy and make us spiritual. He is the Spirit of Christ. He makes us Christlike: He is the Spirit of truth. He guides us into all truth. He is the Spirit of

Power: you receive power for life and service after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. It is He who convinces of sin—not the preacher. He who regenerates—not the Sacraments. He keeps us from doing the things that otherwise we would by striving within us. It is He who helps us to pray and to understand our Bibles. It is He who forms Christ within us. By His work we are transformed from glory to glory until the hope of glory is fulfilled within us and we are made "like Christ."

Ah! What would this poor old world be like if it were filled with people like Jesus? Well, that's what is going to happen when the King comes into His own. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Ask for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit from Him that supplieth the Spirit. He will give the Holy Ghost to them that ask Him.

5. In short the great enrichment is that He gives *Himself.* "As many as *receive Him.*" "Behold I stand at the door and knock . . . open, and I will come in!" "My Father and I will . . . make our abode with Him." Fellowship with God. That is the purpose of creation. That is Paradise regained. Everything else is contained in that. Here is the hope of glory; here is life everlasting. Here is everlasting blessedness and growth from glory to glory in the Father's House. Here is enrichment for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

* * * * *

I close my address to you with a shameful sense of the inadequacy of this attempt to set forth some of the unsearchable riches. I haven't said

the things I wished to say. I can't. I'd like to have told you some of the things He has done for me, and for many another. But I beg you to try Him for yourself. O taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

* * * * *

Chapter VIII

THE LOVE THAT RESTORES

By

D. C. MITCHELL, M.A.

INTRODUCTION

In those Evangelistic Missions in which I have taken part, I have always borne in mind that the Christian Religion is a Religion with a Book. I feel that, if I can get my listeners confronted by the Christ of the New Testament, everything else that the Evangelist desires will follow. Coleridge says somewhere that the great virtue of the Bible is that it finds a man, and Bunyan in his great allegory emphasises the same idea, for his pilgrim is a man with a Burden and a Book. Indeed, it is the Book that makes him realise that he *has* a Burden, and that gives *Evangelist* an opportunity to direct him on the road to the place where he can lose his Burden forever. To magnify the Bible, therefore, to reveal its attractiveness and power and modernism to my hearers is one of my chief endeavours. It may be that through the warm and hearty Christian Spirit of a Revival gathering or an Evangelistic Campaign a man may be started out on a new life of deeper faith and nobler endeavour, but unless the Evangelist has contrived to give him something of an abiding interest in the *Book* of his religion it is

most unlikely that the young believer will have stamina enough to hold on his way. The Evangelist must take long views and build up all through his work in the week or weeks that he is in any district, an interest in and love for the Bible, and especially the New Testament, which will last.

I have said that the Bible finds a man. I have seen it do so again and again, and I need no other proof of its inspired nature than just that. But the trouble with so many people is that they have not yet found the Bible! Unconsciously they think of it as antiquated and out of date. So I make it one of my aims in Evangelistic work to link it up with contemporary events and discoveries and needs, and thus to prove its suitability for the present day.

Cowper sings:—

> "A Glory gilds the Sacred Page,
> Majestic, like the sun,
> It gives a light to every age,
> It gives, but borrows none."

In that noble statement, there is only one line which is false, and it is the last. From his own experience, from the longings and discoveries and achievements of his generation the Evangelist can always bring new light to bear on the Sacred Page and so reveal it as living and life-giving. This is the principle that I have tried to work out in the Address which follows.

THE LOVE THAT RESTORES

John, Chap. xxi., verses 15-19.

I WONDER what your favourite chapter in the Bible is? Mine is the last chapter in John's Gospel. I have a Bible which I could not bring to this meeting because it is beginning to fall to bits. And in it there is no part which is so thumb-marked and yellow with usage as the twenty-first chapter of the Gospel by John.

Mr. A. C. Benson in one of his books, I think it is the *House of Quiet,* likes this chapter for literary reasons. And well he may, for it is full of delightful touches. Take, for instance, the verse which tells us of the number of fishes which had been caught. Sometimes it is argued that this chapter was not written by the same man as wrote the rest of the Gospel. All we can say is, that he was a man who had the same spirit and the same outlook as the author of the first twenty chapters, and that he must have been, like John, the son of Zebedee, a member of the fishing fraternity. Who but a fisherman would have noticed the precise number of the fish captured, one hundred and fifty and three?

Or take that phrase of Jesus', "Feed my Lambs." You mothers who are here to-night sometimes speak of your children as your "lambies." But Jesus used the word before you. Isn't it good to know that your bairns are *His* lambs as well as yours?

In the private journal of Lord Shaftesbury you find this phrase, "Feed my Lambs," quoted again and again. He uses the words in two ways, first

as a command from Jesus, impelling him to struggle on, in Parliament and out of it, in his efforts for the emancipation of the children in the factories and the mines, and in the second place he uses it as a prayer on these children's behalf, daring to look up into the face of the Good Shepherd and to say, "Feed my Lambs." These considerations make us feel that this last chapter of the Gospel by John is very modern and very much alive. It belongs to the class of literature that lives.

But it is not for literary reasons that I like this chapter best, but because of its deep spiritual insight. And in that connection there is no part of it so fascinating as that which describes the interview between Simon Peter and our Lord by the lake side.

There are two people in the picture, and in considering them, we may adopt one of two methods. We may put Simon Peter in the middle and allow the figure of Jesus to pass to the margin. Or we may set Christ in the midst and allow Simon to pass to the margin, using him as a kind of foil to show forth the Saviourhood of the Master. I propose to adopt the second method now.

1. In the first place, think of the Saviour's severity. "So, after they had breakfasted." Try to imagine the feelings of Peter during that morning meal. I fancy that he would eat little. I fancy that his mouth was so full of his heart that there would be little room in it for anything else. It may be that he had had one brief private interview with Jesus since he had denied him in the House of the High Priest. But still his heart would be torn two ways in the intensity

of his anxiety. He would be wanting Jesus to speak to him in the hope that His words would contain a message of pardon. And yet he would be fearful lest Christ should speak, in case the words uttered would be words of condemnation and rebuke.

And the first thing Jesus did say scarcely reassured him. "Simon, son of Jonas." That was the old name, the name which belonged to Peter's unregenerate days. After Jesus called him to His services He had rechristened him, "Thou shalt no longer be called Simon, but Cephas." The name was at once a prophecy and a promise. The shifting sands of Simon's nature were to be converted into solid and reliable rock. But here Christ uses the old name, and it stabs Simon to the heart to hear it. It means that he has failed and gone backwards, that he has to begin all over again in His discipleship.

And the words which follow do not help him either. "Lovest thou Me?" To Peter, in view of what had just taken place, the question seemed unnecessary. For whenever John, with his usual spiritual insight, had recognised the stranger standing on the shore in the pale grey morning light as "the Lord," Peter, with his customary impulsiveness, had cast himself into the water, eager to be the first to reach the Master's side. After that, how could Jesus doubt that His disciple loved Him still? But the Master puts this question to Simon not once only but thrice, "Lovest thou Me?" We are inclined to sympathise with the disciple when we read, "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, 'Lovest thou Me?'"

Now how are we to account for this very real severity on the part of our Lord? The answer is, that it was the one way in which Jesus could at once save His disciple from himself and restore him to His service. If Simon Peter after his fall was to be of any use again then the sin in him had to be plucked out root and branch. There are some diseases which are susceptible to treatment by a physician. But there are others which can only be dealt with by a surgeon. The festering sore must be probed even though it hurts, for otherwise it will only spread and destroy. The secret cancer must be cut out. Now Jesus is the Great Physician. Although the actual term is not to be found in the New Testament, no one can doubt that it describes one aspect of Jesus' saving work. To many souls in pain He brings His anodynes, His soothing and His succour. But we make a great mistake if we imagine that that is the only or even the chief way in which Jesus works. He is also, as Robert Louis Stevenson puts it, "The Celestial Surgeon." Many a time He woundeth, in order that His hands may make whole.

And indeed I will even go further and say that no man can be a true and full disciple of our Lord who has not been so treated by Him. Some years ago a noted living scientist said, "The higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins." There is a very real sense in which these words were true. No Christian, and he is the highest man of all, can worry about his sins. He knows that unto the Lord belongeth forgiveness. But in another sense the words are not true, for no man can become a "higher man,"

unless he is made to "worry about his sins," unless he has passed through bitter sorrows and genuine contrition on their account, and only thus has come to peace and power. It is only down the dark avenue of our repentance that the Angel of God's forgiveness can come to meet us, and a man has to say with David, "I will be sorry for my sin" before he can know the full pleasure and inspiration of Divine pardon.

My Brother, my sister, have you passed through that stage yet? If not, I wish that I could bring you into it to-night. It was the way that our Lord used with Simon Peter, and most of us, perhaps all of us, need the same treatment. Peter betrayed himself by his tongue. His rough Galilean accent showed him up. And we, too, though in a different way, often betray ourselves and our Master also by our tongues, which are often only the too willing instruments of our tempers. Do you remember Jesus' terrible word "of every idle word that man shall speak he shall give an account in the Day of Judgment?" The Saviour had listened to the idle tittle-tattle, the silly, stupid, unkind gossip of the Eastern bazaars, and knew what deadly mischief it could work. Have you and I never been guilty of that, yes, and of worse?

Or think of the lack of balance and proportion in our life. Have we never, as Pascal says, "made an eternity of nothing and a nothing of eternity?"

Or what about the grosser sins? For you never know. You never know when outward respectability may only be of the nature of the Sepulchre, which masks foulness within. Let no man here

be ashamed of tears of penitence and remorse such as Simon Peter must have wept, for "the soul would know no rainbow, had the eyes no tears." Bow your heart now before the righteous sternness of your Lord, for it is thus and thus only that you may come to know the full joy and strength of His forgiveness.

But there is another aspect to the Saviour's attitude in His interview with Simon Peter by the Sea of Tiberias. If He bowed down, it was only that He might lift up. And so I would ask you to notice now His love.

Take that very question, "Lovest thou Me?" Who but a lover would ever ask that question, who but one that desired that the answer would be in the affirmative? That was one thread of hope, to which for all his Master's severity Peter could cling.

Or think again of this. How many times had Peter denied His Master in the House of the High Priest? Three times over. So now our Lord gives His follower three opportunities to restate his loyalty, and so to cancel out his three denials. Was it not love that lay behind that politic and kindly plan?

The disciples all knew by this time of Peter's failure. The knowledge of it was common property. So, to meet the case, Jesus gives His disciple the opportunity to make honourable amends in public and publicly reinstates him. Was that not love?

Further, although unfortunately our authorised version does not make it clear, there is an evolution or upward progress in our Lord's searching questions to Simon.

There are two Greek verbs, which are both translated by our one English word "love." The first expresses the love which is associated with the emotions and affections. But the second, while it includes that, has a deeper implication. It involves a settled and strong purpose of the will. "True love," says George Macdonald, "must dwell not only in the heart, but in the will." Now Jesus in dealing with Simon Peter uses the first word first, and then the second. To put it another way, He so lifts the whole heart and mind of Simon Peter up as to enable him to say, "Hitherto my love has been an uncertain and a fickle thing, like sunshine on a cloudy summer's day. But after this it will never fail again. I shall love Thee with all my strength as well as with all my heart, with all my mind as well as with all my soul. I shall love Thee to the level of every day's most quiet need." Once again, I ask, was it not love, regal love, on the part of Jesus to give His fallen disciple a chance to make this noble avowal.

Or think again of that Royal Command to Simon Peter, "Feed my Sheep." Think of the honour of it. Think of the trust it implied, and therefore of the self-respect it must have restored. What had Jesus said about Himself? "I am the Good Shepherd." That means that now He is about to pass out of sight He virtually asks Simon Peter to take His place, and to feed His sheep on His behalf. Surely there was no lack of love in conferring on a man who had once denied Him such a privilege and such a responsibility.

But, above all, take the wonderful words with

which the interview closes, "Follow Me." These caused a bell to ring in Peter's memory and joy to sing within his heart. For they reminded him of that great day when, perhaps on this very spot by the Sea of Tiberias, a shadow had fallen upon him, as he busied himself with the cleaning and the mending of his nets, and he had turned round to gaze into the most kindly as well as piercing eyes that he had ever looked on, and to hear the tenderest as well as the clearest voice that he had ever listened to, a voice which said precisely this: "Follow Me."

Do you see what all that meant for Simon Peter now? It meant that he was completely taken back. It meant to him the Gospel of the Second Chance. In the war there was a remarkable case of a middle-aged private, who gradually worked his way up, until he came to occupy the highest non-commissioned rank of regimental sergeant-major. Then some one discovered that he was passing under an assumed name, and that he had once been a commanding officer, but had been cashiered for disgraceful conduct and drummed out. The result was that since he had "made good" his commission was restored to him, his sword was given back. Peter must have felt like that. When our Lord said to him once again, "Follow Me," he must have felt that his commission to be the leading apostle was restored to him. And so we realise clearly and beyond all dispute that when our Lord seems most severe he is in reality most loving. "He woundeth, but His hands make whole."

Now, my friends, I want you to believe that this may be true in your case to-night. I want you to

believe that to you, too, Christ is saying, "Follow Me," and that to you also He is giving a Second Chance.

Spurgeon tells us of a man who on the weather-cock on the top of his house had these words printed in huge flaring letters, "God is Love." "I suppose," said a friend, "that means that God's love is as fickle as the breeze." "Not at all," was the answer. "It means that, which-ever way the wind is blowing, God loves us still." So is it, my brother, with you to-night. He loves you still.

I remember speaking upon this subject when I was a chaplain in the army to a crowd of men who had succumbed to the languorous atmosphere of the East, "where there ain't no Ten Commandments." Afterwards in the dusk, a young fellow whose sin had brought him physical disease came to me and said, "I know that what you said to us is right in theory, but will it work, Padre, will it work?" "Try it," I answered, "try it and see." And that youth, he was only nineteen, left that compound cleansed and restored in body and soul. I admitted him to the fellowship of the Christian Church, and I understand that from that day to this he has never looked back. He found that God's love was a love that restored.

I know not in what plight you may be to-night. It may be that you have wandered far away over the mountains of sin, or that in secret thought and desire you may have climbed down to the lowest pit. Or it may be that you have been guilty of what is perhaps the worst sin of all—cherishing the churlish spirit of the elder brother,

who was "angry and refused to go in." But there is a sense in which I do not care. For I have a message to you to-night, and that is that God loves you in Christ and can restore you to moral health and happiness and usefulness.

There is still a life of joy and adventure and glad free service before you if you will turn to Him and trust in Him, who once more says to you "Follow Me."

"Though deep in mire, wring not your hands and weep,
God lends His Arm to all who say, 'I can.'
No shame-faced outcast ever sank so deep
But he may rise again and be a man."

Chapter IX

A CHALLENGE TO INDECISION

By

W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The following address was delivered at the Keswick Convention on Sabbath evening, 22nd July, 1923, in the Eskin Street Tent, about two thousand people being present. This Sabbath evening is the occasion during the Convention when, in the Tent, the service is evangelistic, a special effort then being made to secure the presence of many of the inhabitants of Keswick. Of course, the great majority of those attending the service are Convention Visitors and Christians, so that the evangelistic appeal is made to a very limited number in the great congregation. Yet, the effort is well worth while, and is owned of God. At the close of the following discourse seven or eight publicly signified their desire and intention there and then to accept Christ as their personal Saviour.

The address has been revised by me, but remains substantially as delivered.

A CHALLENGE TO INDECISION

"How long halt ye between two opinions?"—I KINGS xviii. 21.

I WOULD ask your attention this evening to the words in verse 21 of 1 Kings, Chapter xviii., part of which we read:—

> How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him.

What most impresses us as we read these words is their downright common sense. There is nothing here affirmed. The prophet is not saying that Jehovah is God; he is not saying that Baal is not God. He is making a practical proposition, and exhorting to a common-sense line of action. If Jehovah be God, follow Him; if He be not God, then do not follow Him. If Baal be God, follow *him;* but if he be not God, then do not follow him. Whoever is God should be followed. The prophet then applies a test—that was inevitable and necessary.

This is one of the most wonderful scenes in human history; and one that might well engage the genius of some artist—eight hundred and fifty priests, four hundred and fifty of them the priests of Baal, and four hundred others who ate at the table of Jezebel. There they stand on the one hand, and the great crowd of Israel on the other hand, and in the centre stands the prophet, this rugged man whose creed was summed up in his name, El-i-Jah, Jehovah is God. Turning aside from the priests, he addresses the crowd, and says, "If Jehovah be God, follow Him, but

if Baal be God, then follow him; but why halt between two opinions! Believe something! Stand somewhere!" That is the challenge thrown down to these people of old, and it comes to us also across the ages.

1. The prophet here draws a sharp distinction between God and the gods. There is only one true God, and we should discover Who He is. Is Jehovah God, or is Baal God? That is an enquiry of the utmost significance and the greatest importance. The heathen people, then as now, had their gods, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Moloch, Baal, the gods of the Amorites and the Moabites, tribal deities; and they supposed that Yahweh also was a tribal deity, a god like their own, and with the limitations of their own. The prophet, however, believed that there was but one God, and that we must discover who He is. Who is God? There can be no reconciliation between the true God and rival claims and interests. This is the teaching everywhere in the Scriptures, and they never leave us in any doubt as to its meaning on the subject.

There is here no neutral ground; no "No man's land," no border-land where rival interests can shade into one another; no middle ground on which we may take our stand without being under any necessity to commit ourselves to the views on the right or on the left. In Scripture on this matter everything is clean cut, the thinking is clear, the teaching is unmistakable; there are only righteousness and unrighteousness; light and darkness; right and wrong; truth and error; heaven and hell; God and the gods; Christ and the Devil; the upward way and the downward

way. There can be no reconciliation between these; they are eternally antagonistic. Men may halt between them but they cannot combine them. It will be well for the sake of our souls if we think clearly here. We are bidden understand what we are called upon to do, and there is an absolute necessity that we choose between the true and the false. Most people might be disposed to say, "Well, I am not going to occupy myself with these matters at all, and I am under no necessity to make a choice between these rival claims." Oh, but you are. Choice is not optional, but obligatory and necessary. No man can serve two masters, but every man must serve one. God *or* Mammon, but not God *and* Mammon. It will be well for those of us who are Christ's, who have already professed and confessed Him, to remember this. As between these things there can be no agreement. Here there must be no compromise. These rivals are eternal rivals; they are irreconcilable; they are contrary in their very natures, contrary in their foundations and roots, contrary in all their aims and objects, and we may not compromise here. Our Lord said, "He that is not with Me is against Me." We must make a choice, because there is the distinction. There are the alternatives, there are the facts of the case, and the prophet says you must keep this distinction clear. You will never act independently and decisively unless you think clearly, and the Scriptures on this momentous matter help us to think clearly.

2. In the next place, the prophet rebukes the dilatoriness of the people: "Why halt ye between two opinions?" He calls their attention to the

absurdity of such an attitude. What does it mean to halt between two opinions? It means to sway first one way and then the other, to stand first on one foot and then on the other, to look first this way and then that way, to hop like a bird from this bough to that, fore and back, fore and back, and the prophet says, "How absurd! Have you no conviction? Have you no intelligence? Have you no judgment? Cannot you make up your mind? Cannot you stand somewhere and believe something?" I frankly confess that if I had not resolved to be out and out for Christ I would not meddle with Christianity at all; I would at least endeavour to get out of this world all that it holds for me. The attitude of the matter is eminently unsatisfactory. A person who oscillates as did these people, who sways to and fro, who is first here and then there, whose heart at one time appears to be in the Church, and at another time in the world, who is first in the company of God's people, and then in the company of the ungodly—such a one enjoys neither Christ nor the world; he has the duties of religion without its joys, and the love of the world without its pleasures. It is eminently unsatisfactory. I have sympathy, within limits, with the people who never darken a church door; they at least are not hypocrites, first here and then there, swaying to and fro, looking this way and that, grasping time with one hand, and clutching at eternity with the other, seeking to make the most of both worlds. Such an attitude is altogether unsatisfactory, and the prophet is resolved to make an attempt at least, to bring that halting and hesitating attitude on the part

of Israel to an end. "Why halt ye between two opinions?" "Why talk a double language? Thy speech betrayeth thee."

3. But further he would remind them of the perilousness of such an attitude. Destiny may overtake them before they have made their decision, and destiny stares every one of us in the face. We dare not procrastinate. We have life now, but we have no promise of it to-morrow; and while we are endeavouring to reconcile the irreconcilable, while we are hopping from this position to that, hesitating, halting, limping along the way, destiny may overtake us and settle the matter for us. The prophet says we cannot maintain this attitude; we must do something; we must stand somewhere; we must make some sort of a confession. We are rational creatures endowed with conscience and will, with intelligence and freedom, and we must make a choice. No one can choose for us. God Almighty cannot choose for you and for me. You and I can put God, Who made us and Who gives us the breath that we breathe, at arm's length and say, we will not yield to Thee; or, we can turn to Him, through the gracious operations of His Holy Spirit, and receive His great salvation. But the responsibility is yours and is mine.

4. Having drawn this vital distinction between God and the gods, and having rebuked the dilatoriness of the people, the prophet now calls for immediate decision in the light of the facts—and so do I. This great Convention Movement is not an evangelistic Movement; it is thoroughly to the core of it evangelical, but it is not evangelistic according to the common use of that word.

It is a Movement for Christians, but it draws many unbelievers in its wake, and they get truly converted to God. I suppose there is never a Convention in which souls are not born again. This meeting (the closing Sunday evening of the Convention) is held especially for the purpose of making an evangelistic appeal. I suppose the majority here to-night will feel that this message is not exactly suited to their need. It was not intended to be. We are here to-night with a message for the minority in this tent, for those sitting here or there, who have never made the great decision, who have never come to the Lord Jesus Christ and received Him as their personal Saviour. In the circumstances is such an appeal worth while? Yes, verily, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth." It were worth while holding the whole Convention from last Friday week to next Tuesday for the salvation of one soul. Christ died for you, and Christ died for me. Heaven's music is silenced to listen to the sob of the repentant soul, and when that soul turns to God and receives Christ, all Heaven's Choirs are started again, and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one*. Where is that one to-night in this great congregation? You are called to immediate decision in the light of the facts.

What is the ground of the claim? It is found in the words, "If the Lord be God." Decision must spring from conviction, and conviction must rest on proof, and proof is here given. You are not asked to act without any guarantee or evidence. There are thousands of years of evidence

behind us. Proof is accumulated heaven-high that Christ can do what He claims to do. When He says, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and you ask what evidence there is that He can do and will do what He says, the answer is—the history of the Church of God is evidence; redeemed souls of all the ages are evidence; "the great multitude that no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb," is evidence. All the saved souls under this canvas to-night are evidence. I am evidence. Christ saved my soul thirty-seven years ago, and I speak not from theory but from experience when I say that He can save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him.

His blood can make the vilest clean,
His blood availed for me.

The Lion of Judah can break every chain
And give you the victory again and again.

Decision springs from conviction, and conviction rests on proof. One conviction is worth tons of opinions. Opinion never yet saved anybody. Naaman had the opinion that if he washed in the waters of the Abana or the Pharpar instead of in the waters of Jordan he should be made clean. "I thought," he said and if he had continued so to think he would have continued to be a leper. Your opinions may easily keep you back from Christ, and rob you of salvation. It is not what you think, or what I think, but what God says

that matters. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"; that is not a matter of opinion, it is a fact, a fact of revelation, and a fact of experience. The people of our text had opinions: first their opinion led toward Baal, and then their opinion inclined them towards Jehovah, but they had no ruling conviction; and Elijah says, "Look here, you must forsake your opinions, and arrive at some settled conviction in the light of the facts. 'If Baal be God, follow him; if Jehovah be God, then follow Him'—but go one way or the other. Do not be racing to and fro. Make up your mind. Decide! Choose!"

The ground of the claim is plain. What, then, is the nature of it? This, that God be followed. If there be a God serve Him. If there be a judgment prepare for it. Let there be an end of this miserable vacillation. Place yourself somewhere, and be something. Have a creed of some kind. If you will not have a Christian creed then have a devil's creed, but have a creed. Believe something. Stand somewhere. Go one way or the other. Do not—for God's sake—do not be jumping from one thing to another. Do not rest in opinions about this and opinions about that, with no intelligence or decision in them. That is the challenge, and the call of the ancient prophet, and also of all true prophets. If the Christian life be right, carry it out; and if it be not right, give it up.

My last word is this—that the claim is urgent. "How long?" There are people here to-night at the crossways. You know in part, but not fully, all that has led up to your being here, and for

you this must prove a night—and this a place—of solemn decision. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" I come to you in all seriousness as a man to man and woman with this common-sense and vital question. I would press it as the prophet pressed it of old. I appeal to your intelligence, I appeal to your conscience. I appeal to your common-sense, I appeal to all the longing in you for things better and higher. I appeal to your unsatisfied souls. I appeal to those aspirations that will rise within you, in spite of all your efforts to crush them. I appeal to you in the ancient words, "How long?"

These people had had three and a half years' opportunity of judging. "How much longer do you want?" the prophet says. And I would ask, how long have some of you been halting? Twenty years? Thirty? Forty? Fifty? Are you halting to-night? How much longer do you want before you are convinced? How many more sermons do you want to hear preached? How many more Sabbaths must roll away wasted? How many more prayers must ascend to Heaven on your behalf before you make the great choice? How many more opportunities do you want before you decide? How many? How long? These are the two great questions: Why? and When? Why are you living as you do? Why are you oscillating in this way? Why is it that there is no decision in your actions, no principle running through your life with regard to the deepest and highest and eternal things? Why? And how long is this to continue? Will you make a date? Will you fix a time? Will you make a compact with God that when you have had so much more

of the kind of pleasure that you are now pursuing, then you will come?

Think of the case of the prosperous man. His fields are producing abundantly, his barns are too small for his crops, and he says to himself, "What shall I do? I am resolved what to do. I am going to pull down these little shanties, and am going to build great barns, and I will fill them with the produce of the earth, and will say to my soul, 'Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" Now it was all right for him to say, "*My* barns, *my* fields, *my* crops, *my* soul," but when he says, "*My* to-morrow," he impinged on the province of God. You cannot mortgage time. To-morrow is not yours. To-morrow is not mine. And so when this man dared to talk about "his to-morrow," he heard a voice which said, "You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you, and then whose shall these things be?" Everywhere in Scripture the transitoriness of life is taught. It is likened to the grass, that groweth up in the morning and is cut down in the evening; to a weaver's shuttle, to a passing cloud, and to a tale that is told. We are ever being reminded of the transiency and brevity of life. Life at the longest is very short, and the place that knows us to-day soon shall know us no more. The voices of these speakers soon shall be silenced; this canvas soon shall cease to look down upon this congregation. We shall go the way of all the earth. The generations have passed, passed, passed, and we hear the tramp of others to-night moving on and out into another life, into another world. Whither? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and

lose his own soul?" Your soul is of more value to you and to God than the whole universe. It is the worst of bargains to barter away your soul for the world, even though you could ever get the world. But no man ever yet had the whole world. We can get only a fragment of it, a fraction of it, and yet men jeopardise their eternity for that little bit. Dare you? Elijah called for a decision in the light of the facts, and so do I. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." People of Keswick, with your abounding opportunities, with your great privileges, think of your responsibilities. People of Keswick—a place greatly honoured those forty-five or forty-six years, a place in which the spirit of God has wrought and manifested Himself as in few places on the earth—you are right here where the Shekinah light is blazing, right here where you hear the music of the voice of God from year to year. And great is your responsibility, for it is in the measure of your opportunity. What then are you going to do with Christ? It is not a question of whether you will do anything with Him or not, but only of *what* you are going to do with Him, for do something you surely must.

You young fellows looking out upon life with all your ambitions, having visions of prospects in State and Church and commerce, do you think that you stand to lose by making choice of Jesus Christ, by yielding your life to Him, by accepting His great salvation? The answer of the Bible and the Church is "No!" Such a decision is infinite gain, and you are called upon to make it. "How long, then, halt ye between two opinions?" Stop your halting. Stand! Think! Understand!

Decide! Decide on the right side, and take the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. He died for you, He loves you, He is wooing you by His Holy Spirit, He has preserved you thus far, He has surrounded you with gracious influences, and He is calling you again to-night. Do not trample over the prayers of a glorified mother or father any longer. Do not resist any longer the pleadings of a faithful Sunday School teacher or minister, do not be despited to the Spirit of grace, do not crucify to yourself the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame. By all the love of Calvary and all the compassion of the Risen Saviour, I beseech of you, make decision here and now for Jesus Christ. Christ died for you in a public place. Cannot you decide for Him in a public place? Naked He bled on Calvary for you. Cannot you to-night accept the clothing of His righteousness for your filthy rags? I beseech of you, come to Jesus. Take Christ as your personal Saviour. If I could make the choice for you, I would make it here and now, but I cannot. You alone are responsible to God for what you do with His Saviour-Son, and the time has now come for you to say what that will be. Let us pray.

Chapter X

THE QUENCHING QUESTION

By

HULBERT L. SIMPSON, M.A.

INTRODUCTION

The whole secret of successful evangelism is one burning heart saying to another with the unmistakable accent of conviction, "We have found life's anointed King." That is a message to which every man is prepared to listen, for its bearer is one who has something to say, so utterly different from the religious speaker whom we all have had at times to endure, who had to say something. It is the "personal touch" that tells, so long as it is not the poke irritant nor the embrace sloppy, but the hand-grip of help. If the evangelist can give evidence of the keen mind as well as the ardent spirit, if the clean collar enforce the appeal for the clean heart, happy is he.

There is a pathetic jauntiness to-day which is ludicrously anxious to have us know that it is "the master of its fate, the captain of its soul," and that its "head is bloody, but unbow'd." Well, what of it? Its bloody head may be unbowed—that it is badly swollen is obvious. And yet, even through the protest, you can catch an undertone in the voice of to-day, an inability

"To trust the heart's denying
That somewhere there is crying,
And somehow there are tears."

It was the writer's fortune to be brought up in a home where the masters of science and the princes of evangelism alike were honoured and frequent guests. From oratory to laboratory there was a swing-door, and never a hint that God could not freely pass from one to the other, at home everywhere, the unseen Head of the house and all its activities for body, soul and spirit. The ideal ruling there was not more an intractable conscientiousness in relation to revelation, than an unrelenting homage to truth in all its manifestations. The dusty and somewhat tattered habit of evangelism, which still repels eyes that cannot see the glory in the grey, was instantly transformed into the apparel of the princes when Henry Drummond was its exponent, with his debonair grace, or William Booth with his commanding presence, or Hugh Price Hughes with his genial humanity, or D. L. Moody with his sane outlook, or Gipsy Smith with that authentic and inimitable touch of romance, or John McNeill keeping the permanent way free from the blocking snows by the salt of humour. The young critic was not put off by any awful gulf between platform mannerisms and table manners. "When they were come out of the synagogue they came into the house," and the Presence passed in too. One might make his approach through science, another might emphasise the social aspect of righteousness, while yet another carried conviction by sheer charm, and Christ won because He was winsome: but in each

and every genuine messenger (and there were not a few unworthy copies of the original masters), the glory and greatness of the Master of them all was the first and last thing that impressed. Not to be by instinctive self-election on that side was to have violated the doctrine of life.

It may be, as some tell us, that the process of redemption to-day must begin with the very name and idea of evangelism. If we are of the true company of passionate souls we shall not be troubled over inessentials, so long as Christ is preached. That lovely word, "the Evangel of the grace of God," has not lost its lustre even after two generations of the mammoth tabernacle, the inquiry-room, the beat-up trail, the special hymn-book with large profits, the uplifted hand of the "convert" in the heated atmosphere, the downcast spirit of the missioner in the cold reception, and all the other effects and evidences of the religious showman. The people of this country have been wonderfully hospitable to any one coming to them in the name of the Lord, without inquiring too closely into his credentials. But those who have made the experiment have found that there was a particularly affectionate welcome for one who came to them as a representative of their own Church, a product of her nurture and care, steeped in her peculiar ethos, having received her special training and submitted to her discipline, and enjoying that Christian freedom in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, so essential to an untrammelled presentation of the Gospel, for which his Church has laboured and fought and suffered.

The best way to redeem the idea of evangelism, and to save both his own way-soiled and routine-hardened soul and the souls of them that hear him, is for the preacher as part of his regular business to do the work of an evangelist, and thus, in making full proof of his ministry, to find and reveal ever-changing lights and fresh sheen in "the many-coloured grace of God."

THE QUENCHING QUESTION

"What think ye of Christ?"—St. Matthew, xxii., 42.

The world is for ever busying itself with what it is pleased to call "burning questions." Some of them do not burn very long. Others turn out to be only finger-burning questions. Some of them throw out crackling sparks; some produce little else than clouds of pungent and obscuring smoke; while most burn while they last with a good deal of heat, but afford wondrous little light. On the whole, however, it is good to keep asking questions, and it is highly important that people should always feel that they have the right to ask questions. The sluice has a function every whit as important and as vital as the dam.

In no sphere of human thought and activity is this maxim more necessary of application than in the realm of religious experience. The dogma dam may be necessary in order to keep the water of life which has been entrusted to the Church from losing itself in the loose sands of individual opinion; but the Church which asks no questions and permits none to be asked is preparing the way either for catastrophe or for stagnation.

We are just emerging out of a somewhat self-

satisfied and arrogant age which had a way of tacitly assuming that it had discovered the right of man to ask questions. The scientist asked some new and striking questions, and the very asking of them, even where they cannot yet be answered, has contributed to the well-being and the efficiency of the race. The social reformer has been asking some loud and startling questions, and there is no saying when these will cease echoing; and pray God that some of them will never be silenced until they are answered. And in this new pride and power of questioning there were not a few who harboured a kind of resentment against the Church of Christ, more or less overt, because they imagined that she was anxious, not to mother, but to smother, the spirit of inquiry.

1. We cannot too often remind ourselves and everybody else that it was Jesus Christ who, among religious teachers, encouraged men to think for themselves. He it was who first taught them that they had the right to ask questions about all the important things of life, and showed them how to question. If you go through the scanty record of His words and conversation you will be amazed to find how it bristles with points of interrogation. His whole teaching is sluiced with questions. It was the lack of thought and imagination that the prophets of the Old Testament had recognised to be at the bottom of so much of the prevalent sin and misery. "My people do not consider." And, so far from suppressing inquiry and eager pursuit and research, it was a continual marvel to our Lord that men should be so supine. "How is it that ye do not

understand?" "How think ye?" "What shall it profit?" "Why do ye not yourselves judge?"

We are told that upon one occasion when a young man came to our Lord asking questions and answering them, Jesus gave him the very highest commendation. It was not when this young thinker answered piously or replied in the kind of way that he might have thought would please our Lord, but when he answered *discreetly* —"put his mind to it," as the Greek has it, that Jesus said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." There spoke, not a servile lover of dogma, not a forger of chains and creeds, but the Pioneer, not only of our salvation, but of our intellectual liberty, of freedom of thought and freedom of speech, and the right of every man to judge for himself. If I may make a personal confession of faith, I think it was that word, almost more than any other, that, in the dawn of awakening consciousness, when I realised that the time had come for me to determine my position with regard to the great issues which confront us all in this life, attracted me to the person and discipleship of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. I realised with peculiar joy and satisfaction that the Christian religion was one which appealed not merely to my emotions alone or even to my moral sense, but to what I was pleased to call my intellect, and to the whole man. I suppose that my road to Damascus was just that stage of development when first I understood that although Christianity is a religion of questions, it is not a questionable religion. I felt, as I have never ceased to feel, that here was the one true Lord of life, the Man Christ Jesus, with His

great frank questions, and His own satisfying answers to the only ones that really matter in the last resort. I am not so foolish as to blind myself to the fact that there are many unanswered questions which leave certain tracts of life and experience still in the shadow. But I have no doubt that He who has answered the greater holds the key to the less, and that one day I shall know even as I am known. I do not see how a reasonable being can demand more, nor how he can face life with less. I understand the mind of young Lieut. Simmonds, of Mansfield College, Oxford, who, before leading his men over the parapet, and his death in action on the Somme, wrote, "If Christ were not my strength I would commit suicide to-night. We must just wait in all penitence and humility before His Cross, seeking to hide nothing from Him, and fixing our soul's attention on that symbol of His strength and that symbol of the suffering love of the Father. Then He will come to us (I speak because I know), and He will flood our life with the joy and peace of His Resurrection and glorification."

There are some things that can wait; but not our personal attitude to *that*. There are some things that can and must be set aside in these days when we are all so busy, but not our communion and fellowship with Him who has the keys of death. This is the beginning of everything and the end of everything, the question of our relationship to Jesus Christ. Not without reason did He call Himself the Alpha and the Omega—the A to Z—of life, for in terms of Him the whole story of life must be written, and the

mystery of existence spelled out and reduced to reason. And in this day when everything is being ruthlessly brought to the touchstone of service, when there is nothing too old or venerable to escape the probing and questioning spirit, the religion of the great Questioner must gain a fresh significance and attractiveness. Christ does not seek to impose something upon us from without, something which is merely arbitrary or conventional, something which we can take or leave. Nor is there anything hole-and-corner about the religion of Jesus Christ. He invites inquiry; He challenges criticism. His books are always open to inspection. Christianity is a religion of quest and question, an open door, an endless way. Was there ever a teacher, a potentate, a prophet so great, so frank, so utterly sure of Himself and of His claims that He could calmly and confidently submit His very person to the searchlight of investigation, and say: "What think ye of Christ?"

The very daring of it should make us pause. Majesty and might and the assumption of authority are not such very imposing and terrifying things. But I am afraid of a God who chooses the weak things of this world. It makes me wonder and think. I am afraid of might that is so strong and sure and commanding that it can afford to allow itself to be questioned and put to the uttermost proof. I am awed by One who comes to me as a Babe and as a Crucified Man, and who even in the glory of Heaven has the appearance of a Lamb as it had been slain. This is Divine camouflage with a vengeance, and it must mean something tremendous. It must

mean something that I neglect at my infinite risk.

2. That is how this tremendous question, which at first sight looks so innocent, strikes me upon second thoughts about it. I have scarcely recovered from my pleasure at the winsomeness and attractiveness of the Man who is so frank and open, when I am overcome with a feeling of awe of One who can afford to speak in this way. That gentleness is terrific. If He were to smite with the sword or to call down fire we would know where we were. If He would put a dramatic end to sin and to sinners! If He would assert His authority and stop us in mid-career of our folly and sin, or our carelessness and casual indifference to His Church and Kingdom and commands! But He does not. Christ will not force Himself upon you. If the inhospitable Samaritans do not want Him He punishes them in a far more terrible fashion than the disciples suggested. They were for calling down fire from heaven upon them. Jesus did something far more awful. He simply passed on and left them. If the Gadarenes prefer their swine to His company, He does not argue the point. He enters the boat again. The viewless wind fills the sail. Slowly the vessel draws out. He goes as quietly as He came. They will never, never be troubled with His disturbing presence again.

Or is it Judas in the upper room, devising deeds of darkness blacker than the night into which he went out? We know that there were two swords in that room, and at least one man who was not slow to draw them and ten men who would have sprung to his help. One word from Jesus, and Judas would never have left that room

alive. But that is not His way. Jesus lets him go, just the way He has let you go all these years, using no restraint or compulsion beyond the appeal that He has made, not once nor twice, to your better nature; and the manifold proofs of His forebearance and forgiveness that He has shown you unto this very hour.

3. And so the asking of this old, old question again to-day reminds us in the third place that an hour will come when we shall never hear it asked again. The sun does not ring a bell when it is sinking in the west. The longest day declines almost without observation. Grey hairs do not have warning tongues. But here and there they appear. It was at a comparatively late stage in their training that Jesus brought His disciples into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, and there definitely asked them to make up their minds about Him. It was not enough that they should merely acquiesce in the current opinion about Him. "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" was a question of importance for the historian. "But who say ye that I am?" was a question of life and death for the individual soul.

Under the hand of God every man is brought at some time or other in his life into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi. These parts may be a pier, or a railway platform, or a bedside, or an open grave, or the arrival of a telegram. There comes a certain definite time or times when a man is brought face to face with the fact of Jesus Christ, and must give verdict upon Him. Usually there are three ways of dealing with so-called "burning questions." The question may not be a burning one for you, and you can afford to leave it un-

answered. Or it may concern you, but you cannot bring yourself to supply the right answer. Or you may answer it and settle the question once and for all. With this paramount question there are not three lines of treatment open but only one. You cannot avoid answering it. For even if you say you cannot decide, your non-committal is in itself an answer. For you are in the same case as that of a drowning man to whom some friendly bystander throws the life-line, and he replies that he cannot decide whether to seize it or not. He *has* decided in deciding not to decide. The coroner's inquest next day leaves no doubt of that.

That is the tragic turn, that so many believe that they can linger indefinitely in the parts of Cæsarea Philippi. In running by train from France into Italy, unless you know what to look for you cannot tell when you have made the transition. The sun shines just the same. The Mediterranean looks just as bright and blue as it did before. The sights and sounds are similar. But you are in another country, beneath another flag, subject to different laws, under an entirely different form of government. It is the imperceptibility of the change that misleads us. There always arrives the day when the dear old lady declares that they don't use such clear type as the printers of her young days did; when the ever-green septuagenarian confides to his cronies at the club that public speakers do not take pains to articulate as they did in the good old days. "Some one really should tell him to raise his voice!" Dear souls! how we love them and their innocent delusion. But do not smile. You may

be suffering from a more vital disability. Your ability to discern may become weakened. Too much and too long contact with the world and its lower standards may have vitiated your taste. The spiritual faculty is the most delicate of all and the first to become blunted, as the rare blooms are the first to suffer in a vitiated atmosphere. You dare not tamper with it. I have seen scales used for measuring lead by the rough hundred-weight. You might bang them with a sledge-hammer and make no impression. I have seen others so delicate that a hair sufficed to tilt the beam, and the touch of a clumsy finger threw them out of gear. It was a heathen philosopher who said, "I ought to take care that the eye of my soul does not become dim." It was a greater who said, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

4. "What think ye of Christ?" Not only may your ability to answer that question go, but let me warn you in all earnestness, in the last place, that *this question judges you.* The thoughts of a man are the index to his character, and estimates are ever two-edged. Thomas Carlyle complained to Thackeray that he was tired of hearing praise of Titian's wonderful colouring, and that he saw nothing in his canvases to be so enthusiastic about. To which Thackeray replied: "That's a severe judgment on Tom Carlyle, not on Titian." If you tell me that you have no taste for Beethoven's Sonatas, that his music bores you, and that you would rather have a swinging two-step any day, your opinion of the great musician does not affect his position in the slightest degree. No, but you have given me some fairly

damning evidence about yourself. If you cannot read Wordsworth, think him dull, and would rather spend an hour with the latest trashy novel that would find its fittest place in the waste-paper basket *under* your table, it is not really so rough on the poet as it may sound; but it classifies you. I have sometimes listened to the gentleman who plays poker in the smoke-room of a liner on the subject of Foreign Missions, but there were certain reasons why I never could feel that he was really the expert on the subject that he posed to be. Everybody knows Dr. Johnson's wise reply to the man who thought fit to inform him that he was not a gentleman: "Sir, you are no judge." There comes a time when a man loses the ability to judge of spiritual things. How can he, if he neglects to cultivate that within him which alone can give him the right and the power to judge? In answering this momentous question as to the person and claims of Christ we are thrown back upon all our faculties. It is not merely an affair of the intellect: it is a matter of a right heart also, and a sound will. That is why the judgment of so many who pose as sincere doubters and honest sceptics is valueless. On a summer day a few years ago the *Glendale* was wrecked off the Mull of Kintyre. The circumstances were peculiar. The trustworthy captain knew every inch of the coast, and at first there seemed to be no explanation of the mysterious catastrophe. But at the inquiry it was found that a load of iron pillars which the vessel was carrying had been placed in too close proximity to the compass and had deflected it. So a man may imagine that he is steering by the trustworthy light of reason and

sound judgment. His logic may be accurate in its working. But all the while there is something in his life which nullifies the guiding of the compass. He may think he is holding a true course, while he is heading straight for the rocks.

"What think ye of Christ?" They answered and said, "He is worthy of death." These men thought they were judging Christ, when all the time they were judging themselves. They were convicting themselves of short-sightedness, of bigotry, of jealousy, of total inability to discern the spiritual when they were in its presence, or of knowing the truth when they saw it. He whom they condemned as worthy of death has been deemed worthy of all honour and glory by saints and angels, by all the succeeding generations of men and by Almighty God. But their own answer to that question is their condemnation for all time.

If other questions are burning questions, this is the great quenching question. It silences all others, for it is itself the answer to everything. We all think that we have the right to make certain demands of Almighty God. We are ready with many questions, questions with a touch of complaint in them, with a note of self-excuse, with more than a hint of self-satisfaction. God is ready with His answer: "What think ye of Christ?" That is His Word, His last word. And silence falls at once upon all the questioners. After that, as we read, "no one ventured to ask Him any more questions."

Are you blazing with wrath? hot with indignation? burning with a sense of fancied injustice? Look at God's answer in Christ, and then try to

put any of your questions. You dare not. If you cannot reply to the great question, "My Lord and my God," you must remain at any rate decently dumb. If God has not satisfied you He has silenced you. This Christ who began by appealing to our attention ends by compelling our attention. There is, after all, a burning question, and there is only one: "What will Christ, the Judge of all, think of me?"

Chapter XI

NEW WORLDS FOR OLD

By

J. SOMMERVILLE SMITH, M.A.

INTRODUCTION

"New Worlds for Old" is a post-war message. It was meant to confront and counteract a mood of mind very prevalent after the initial exultations, actual experiences and ultimate disillusionments of the war. It was the first address of a mission week, and had as its particular purpose the arousal of new hope.

Without such a hope it is difficult, if not impossible, to get a beginning made at all in the work of evangelism. It is interesting and instructive to note how frequently the approach of the Spirit of God to the soul, in Old Testament times and New, is with a "Fear not!" or a "Be of good courage." There are many patients the best physicians cannot cure, not because of the essential deadliness of the disease, but because hope has somehow been irrecoverably lost. Some men die too easy, the experts tell us. All ministers who have sought to "do the work of an evangelist" know that this is one of the difficulties in the spiritual sphere to be frequently met with, and not only in the reaction after the war strain. This mood must be mastered, if progress is to be made.

The case of the father of the epileptic boy in the 9th of Mark is the case of many. They are alive to their distressful situation, their desperate need, their pathetic impotence. They have tried in turn every remedy they know, and have found it wanting. They have tried the disciples and found them wanting. So they yield to the stern logic of experience, and are on the point of settling down to the acceptance of the inevitable and the unalterable. If they turn to the Master Physician, it is with a cry whose undertone is that of despair: "If Thou canst do anything." To which the immediate and challenging reply is: —"If thou canst believe." The dull despair of the spirit must be broken in upon and hope awakened. Among numerous instances of this, mark the miracle wrought upon the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple. The cripple's first appeal to Peter and John was no more than the monotonous whine every passer-by had heard for a lifetime. There was no lift, no grip in it, nothing that moved to meet the healing mercy of God which was there to minister to his need. The conditions of cure were not present until the two comrade-disciples said, "Look on us." Then only did he give heed, and then only did the saving power of the risen Christ begin to act. Preachers seeking verdicts for Christ and results in the salvation of men will find it so still. They must find the means with many men and in many missions to invade the prison of despair.

The main conviction on which this particular address is based is that this necessary preparatory work is best done by the appeal to actual experience. In the address two words of per-

sonal witness are drawn from the apostolic age but these are backed up by instances drawn from the Church's age-long story right down to the present hour. There are many minds to which a doctrine, explained with whatever clearness and earnestness, does not carry the irresistible appeal we want to make in the work of evangelism. Men want to know how it comes out in real life. It is working models which interest them and convince them. When the preacher has thus persuaded them that the thing they have despaired of can be done, that God is even now equal to the impossible situation, the way is open for a fuller presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus and a stirring summons to discipleship and service. This was carried out in the remaining days of the mission.

The constituency to which the appeal was made was not a specialised one. It was an ordinary adult audience in a working-class community, ranging in age from the youth of sixteen to folks of sixty. Some of those present were, to those who knew their story, among the best illustrations of the truth preached. Some were of those to whom it was hoped that the message would come in power. Some were living in the shadow of faded hopes and in the chill of a lost glow. Some have spoken gratefully of the heartening which the word brought to them. Some have testified of the blessing received in the subsequent days of the mission when masters in Israel related the Gospel to the needs of the individual and the problems of the hour.

In the following up of the address no special pressure was brought to bear upon those present.

There was no after-meeting, no lifting of hands or signing of cards. All were made aware of the willingness of the preacher to unfold personally and more fully the truth that saves. The invitation was repeated with more urgency as the week advanced, but for the major part of the result we have to trust to the fulfilment of the promise regarding any word which is God's own truth—"It shall not return unto Me void."

NEW WORLDS FOR OLD

Throughout the course of time the story of human life has been told in two main versions. These stand in clear contrast, and they divide the world. The first is furnished in the opening chapter of Ecclesiastes:—

> "The thing that hath been it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun."—Eccl. i. 9.

Here is a verdict passed on life by one who had a big share in it. He had a command of the recognised sources of pleasure and satisfaction which few have. What did he not possess for the living of a full life?

He had intellectual interests and a noble chance of satisfying and fostering them. He had leisure for research, and he used it. He pierced into the secret of things and won a name as a discoverer of the treasures of wisdom. But was he satisfied? Not at all. More knowledge often meant a heavier heart. Increase of knowledge was increase of sorrow.

In the wake of this experience reaction came.

The dispirited seeker turned to the intoxicating cup. Something sang to his wearied heart the same seducing song which Omar Khayyam heard:—

> "Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
> Your winter-garment of Repentance fling,
> The Bird of Time has but a little way
> To flutter—and the Bird is on the wing."

There was nobody to ration our writer in the pleasures he took. He gave them the chance of yielding all they could yield. He laid all on the Altar of Pleasure, and if it could have done what it promises to do to any man, it would have done it for him.

From pleasure he turned to labour. He became busy with all sorts of enterprises—house-building, forestry, gardening, great municipal improvement schemes, not excepting the providing for musical culture and attention to the fine arts. Andrew Carnegie was evidently not the first in this field.

But the verdict on them all is the same:—

> "The Wine of Life keeps oozing, drop by drop.
> The Leaves of Life keep falling, one by one."

Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.—Eccl. iv. 16 (R.V.).

Not that he did not see that there was something more in wisdom than in folly. "The wise man's eyes," he declares, "are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness." Alas! that it should avail so little. "Yet, I perceived," he confesses, "that one event happeneth unto all."

The preacher was a thorough-paced pessimist. He did not quite leave God out. He believed in a cold, cheerless way that there was a God and that He had a plan, but that men did not know it. Apart from the noble conclusion of the Book which corrects its earlier chapters, the book of Ecclesiastes has been not inappropriately named "An Altar to the Unknown God."

With such an empty outlook the verdict on life is not much higher nor more heartening than Omar's:—

> "Some for the Glories of this world; and some
> Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
> Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
> Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"

Now this is a mood often to be met with at the present hour, and just because the Bible is the mirror of a real world—real, though set in the light of eternity—we meet it here. We have a Disraeli, for instance, reaching, as *The Times* declared, the pinnacle of ministerial renown, the favourite of his sovereign, the idol of society summarising his view of life in the words: "Youth is a mistake, manhood a struggle, old age a regret." We have our Thomas Hardy speaking of Faith, Hope and Love as "broken beneath the passing feet of the years which, like great black oxen, tread the world." And East meets West in the dismal readings of life by Swami Vivekananda: "Social service and philanthropy are mere social scavengering. No everlasting good can be done in the world."

Is it not Ecclesiastes over again: "The thing that hath been it is that which shall be, and that

which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun"?

Now, to my thinking, we have here one of the greatest dangers of our time. A mood like this is all too apt to lay its paralysing hand on the spirit of Church and Nation. One of the saddest features of these post-war days is the number of hopeless people to be met in a day's journey —disappointed, disillusioned, despairing people. They have come to expect nothing but the old way of things in the lives of men, in the story of the Church, the country, or the world. They smile a sarcastic smile at everything—at the hope of spiritual revival, at the vision of ampler justice, at the dream of world-peace. Instead of the building of a Holy City on service and sacrifice, they only foresee the building of Babylon again on greed and wrong, force and falsehood. How can such a prospect fail to petrify all life and effort?

Now I do not propose to argue the case for hope and confidence of better things point by point. I know what we are up against when we try to advance the Kingdom of God by a single yard. That advance will be disputed to the death. The most buoyant among us will come to believe that we still inhabit the same world as crucified our Lord.

All I want to do is to set over against this dark, despairing view of life, this consciousness of the grind of material forces, the version of two men who had faced it all and fought their way through to a nobler and more heartening conclusion—Paul and John.

Hear what Ecclesiastes says: "The thing that

hath been it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun." The same old sin, the same old shame, the same old weakness, defeat, failure and decay.

But hear what Paul says: "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new." —2 Cor. 5, 17 (R.V. marg.). And listen to another voice, the voice that comes from the quarries of Patmos, from one bent with adversity, persecution, injustice and suffering: "He that sitteth on the Throne saith, Behold, I make (am making) all things new."—Rev. xxi. 3.

Now, between these two renderings of life and history, to which does your vote go? For me, I cannot but cast it for the New Testament speakers. They did not deal in sentiment. They were in close touch with reality, closer than Ecclesiastes. Ill-health, ill-treatment, ill-will—to these they were no strangers. They could not at will create a hedge of sunshine round their lives, and forget even for a day the desperate anguish of the world. In their generation justice was fighting a hard and seemingly losing battle with injustice. Right was repeatedly thrown back. Evil was constantly triumphing. It was no mere poetic fancy, but a hard, crushing fact:—

> "Truth for ever on the scaffold
> Wrong for ever on the throne."

That was the world as they knew it. Their Lord lingered. He did not come back a day or two or a year or two after He went away. There re-

mained no illusions on that point. Their faithful ones suffered, and no Divine Voice vindicated them. Their dear ones died, and there was not the faintest sign of the Advent of victory and glory. Was Ecclesiastes right after all: "The thing that hath been it is that which shall be . . . and there is no new thing under the sun"?

A thousand times No! "No new thing under the sun?" These comrades of the Cross stand boldly before the world and say:—"If any man is in Christ there is a new creation, the old things are passed away, behold, they are become new." "He that sitteth on the Throne saith: Behold I am making *all things* new."

Why, every conversion is an evidence of this truth. Every life new made is a challenge to the plaint—that there is nothing new under the sun. If Ecclesiastes had drawn out Paul's horoscope he would have portrayed him going on to the end a fanatical Pharisee, or, if the early fires should have died down, drivelling down into an invincible self-content. But that was because the preacher had never looked into the Face of Christ, and was not able to conceive of a Christ-like God.

If he had had Augustine's future to predict, what would he have made of the man who ran away from his mother's prayers and almost broke her heart?

If he had had Raymond Lully's hand to read, would he by any chance have discovered in that dainty, dangling courtier a future ambassador for Christ and a daring crusader of the redemptive love of the Cross?

If he had known John Newton, would it ever

have dawned on him that that "African Blasphemer," as Newton called himself, would be found voicing the secret soul of our faith and love in his hymn: "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds"?

If Fred N. Charrington had come before him, with all that life offered to the promising son of a prosperous brewer, could he have conceived the miracle which issued in the choice of Christ, His Cross and His service, in preference to a fortune, a path of easy-going and a possible peerage?

Think of it, brothers, God is always ready to do something new. He is always on the initiative. He is out to create new hopes, new impulses, new affections, new powers. Call no situation impossible. He is the God of the impossible. He can change things. There is only one unpardonable sin, it is the sin for which we do not seek pardon; only one unconquerable temptation, it is the temptation over which we do not claim victory. Can you stand up and say, "I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord?" Then you can pass on to say: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

Turn to Him, then. Trust in Him. Take ten looks at Him for one at your own powers and resources. In his essay on Robert Burns, Stopford Brooke lays the blame for the tragedy which clouded and cut short a life so charged with power, on the Ayrshire ministers of the poet's time. They were as a class saturated with Moderatism. They believed in culture, but rejected all ideas of conversion. They trusted in ecclesiastical authority and had no room for evangelical

teaching. They knew nothing of those powers that overleap all barriers of circumstance to win and change lost men.

Robert Burns was not devoid of a spiritual sense. Far as he might be in the far country, he turned many a wistful look home. "The Cottar's Saturday Night," was one of those lingering looks. Why didn't he set out? Because, as Dr. Brooke says, those blind guides threw Burns back on himself. They did not show him the Father. He might have come all the way if he had been shown the Father. But these Moderates left the burden of return and renewal upon himself, upon his powers, his resources, his impulses. Why should they? They need not, should not so have done. In his case, your case, my case there stands One among us as full of power as of pity; and the testimony of tens of thousands is summed up in the words:—

> "He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
> He sets the prisoner free,
> His blood can make the foulest clean,
> His blood availed for me."

This is life's one great noble chance to those who live in the light of the day of the Son of Man. This is what He came for. This is what God engages to do. Silence your whining fear. Repudiate your miserable mistrust. Judge nothing by the failure of your own powers and purposes. God is more than your most and better than your best. Launch out on His promise, His good faith, His tried and tested power. In the light of the Cross, uplifted, accepted and conquered, everything is possible. In spite of every-

thing, you may yet be the man God meant you to be, and do what He meant you to do. Claim Christ to-day, Saviour, Master, Friend. He claims you.

This will not only make a glorious difference to you. It is as true of the Church as of the believer, as true of society as of the world. All hope, all help, all progress come in terms of Christ. "How soon a smile of God can change the world."

Let us be awake enough, loyal enough, sharers enough in His redeeming passion and we shall see the sight John saw, not as a promise looked at as through a telescope, but near, incredibly near, and splendidly possible: "He that sitteth upon the Throne saith: Behold, I am making all things new."

Chapter XII

THE KINGHOOD OF JESUS

By

TOM SYKES

INTRODUCTION

Associated with the following address are some revealing experiences for which I am most grateful. One Sunday evening in a rather rough zinc picture house, I had to speak to six hundred men, most of them workers in blast furnaces and unattached to any place of worship. I gave the address on the "Kinghood of Jesus." The men listened, appreciated, and many of them were deeply moved. Six of them at the close quite spontaneously came forward and knelt where the screen hung. I had never mentioned any such action. It was another proof that men everywhere are saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus."

This year by the invitation of a Trades and Labour Council I was asked to preach in a cinema one Sunday morning. The previous experience and many others prompted me to take this subject, and even yet results are being reaped by the Churches as a result of that service. One thing I am sure of, there is no need to apologise for the Gospel nor dilute it in any way. A big heroic Christianity appeals and wins.

THE KINGHOOD OF JESUS

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head."—MATTHEW xxvii. 29.

AND if we had been there and seen them do it could we ever have forgotten the sight? Would it not have made an indelible impression and ever afterwards been a kind of standard and test of behaviour? What kind of impression does it make upon us now? Surely if we have any gift of historical imagination it will stir us deeply. Everything depends upon how we approach. If we come to this scene in the temper that would botanise on a mother's grave, to analyse and dissect, we shall go away empty. The redeeming truths of life do not disclose their secrets to the querulous mind. It is when we come to the stooping reverence of wonder that His wounds become the windows of His love. The light of love streams into us casting out the darkness and making our souls incandescent with luminous purity; the light of love. There is a striking disparity between the seeming occasionalness of this incident and its real immensity of meaning. Looked at outwardly, are you not shocked by the sheer brutality of it all? Looked at inwardly, are you not amazed at the demeanour of the sufferer? He does not shrink or protest, He is girt with the muffled gentleness of a divine strength. He demonstrates an inward support in the midst of outward agony and hate. Perhaps this was the bitterest ingredient in the ashy, gritty cup of death He had to drink. It also introduces us to the nature of the agony. His agony was not fear of

death, shrinkage from suffering, and concern for Himself. He paid the costly price of living for others. What would happen to them if they behaved in this brutal way to Him? "Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and weep for your children." He had heard their morally insane cry, "His blood be on us and on our children." He was afraid that it might come—He shrank in horror from being the innocent occasion by which hurt might come to others. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Thus the matchless regality of Jesus was manifested in scenes and treatment calculated to obscure it. "There was none other good enough to pay the price of sin"; but He was.

The circumstances need not detain us long. Here is a mark of Roman civilisation. The condemned prisoner ceases to have any value. He is the legitimate subject for the sport of His guards. Those Roman soldiers could not let Him alone. He always wakes people up to do something. They make a mock king of Him and crown Him with thorns. They kneel before Him offering a false homage, little suspecting that what they do in ridicule some day the race will do in reality. For Him is reserved the final Monarchy; "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," and He shall reign, because when we were at our worst He displayed His best. The government shall come to be on His shoulders, and of His government there shall be no end.

But can we judge these Roman soldiers? Is He not still being crowned with thorns? Suppose it is true that "what is done to one of the least" is

done to Him? Think of what is done to thousands of the least? Whittier witnessed an auction slave sale in New Orleans slave market. He heard the auctioneer ask for a special bid for one girl because she was a Christian. The contradiction and the wrong roused the poet's soul and fired his imagination. "A Christian up for Sale," he wrote:

> "A Christian going, going, gone.
> Who bids for God's own image?
> In that poor victim of the market place,
> I see Thee stand once more,
> Bound, scourged and sold again."

We have got to realise Him in this way. He is still identified with our human lot. Redemption is by identification. Our Saviour is our Brother. The insertion of His redeeming challenge is the power by which we shall find salvation.

We have then here *the Coronation of Jesus.* Never a Coronation like it, but, then, never a King like Him. Pilate said, "Art Thou a King?" He replied, "I am"; and He was and is and will be. But He added significantly, "My Kingdom is not of this world." His Royalty is in the Realm of Spirit and therefore creatively eternal. This is the secret of the wonder of Jesus. There is nothing like Him in history. He emerged from the obscurity of His artisan home in Nazareth without the prestige of social birth or the authority of the powers that were. He went about doing good. His greatness was not in what He did, but in Who He was. Within three years He is trapped, betrayed, denied, crowned with thorns and executed without the gate, but He lives for ever. He

is in deed and truth "the world's imperishable wonder."

Out of His Kinghood arises His perennial challenge. His call was for followers. Following Him does not mean talking about Him: it means living after His spirit; personally and gladly, repeating Him and His works. Truth is the summit of being, and character is truth radiating forth upon the world through our lives. That is what St. Paul means when he says, "God's Son was born in me." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He does not ask for our adulation and compliments. We are qualified to follow Him only when we worship Him. Worship means adoration, surrender, obedience. Our surrender is the acceptance of His power to save. Our obedience is the joyous response He qualifies us to make. He becomes our Prophet, Priest and King.

This Coronation with thorns was the *fulfilment* of *His opportunity.* He had come the royal road to this highness. He need not have been here unless He had willed it. Physical lot counts for little compared with Spiritual fidelity. We cannot measure life by its years. Arithmetic is futile in the calculation of worth. "We live in deeds not years, in thoughts not breaths, in feelings not in figures on a dial. We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives who feels most, thinks the noblest and acts the best." Jesus could have had another Kingship. It was offered to Him. "If Thou wilt fall down and worship I will give Thee all the Kingdoms of this world." The disciples came and would have made Him king. But these offers were far too costly. There are some successes so cheap that we cannot afford them. There

are some defeats so dear that we must pay the price. If a man violate his principles, pawn his conscience, catch the nearest way, he may come to temporary power, but what of himself. The blush to be dreaded is the blush that blisters the soul when memory accuses it of treachery. "Let thy mind contrive not against thy mother, Hamlet, leave her to heaven and those thorns that in her bosom lodge to prick and sting." Jesus might have saved His skin, but it would have been at the expense of His soul. He hurled from Him the suggestion of compromise. The skin was torn with thorns, but His soul was sovereign through it all. This is the great demand He makes upon us. John Bunyan said to the Magistrate, "I will do nothing contrary to my conscience." Twelve years' imprisonment and domestic anguish was the price, but the immortal vision of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was the reward. Jesus is ever seeking for loyal hearts and true.

The way in which He fulfilled His opportunity made possible *His triumph.* I know you can ask what good did it do. I would answer, sometimes the best good seems to do nothing but is everything. Good has resident in itself strength to suffer and to triumph. We have got to seriously revise what is powerful and majestic in life. Not the trumpery pomp and circumstances of outward show. Not Cæsar, but Jesus. The power of God unto salvation is a power of love. Love is so self-respecting in its pristined purity that it cannot sully itself with duplicity. Love is so plastic and supple that it can stoop to the lowest indignity and suffer out to the uttermost, and at the point of seeming extinction is reborn and mighty to

save. If I may illustrate, they took His poor body from the Cross and laid it in the new hewn tomb in Joseph's garden. They rolled the stone and sealed it with the Imperial signet and strengthened the guard. But great Cæsar himself and his Imperial army could not have kept Him there. Here is the world's Armageddon. When Cæsar falls Cæsar is finished. When physical force is broken it is done. But when Jesus dies, crowned with thorns, He is just beginning. Unhorsed, unafraid, unarmed, He faced the worst, marched into the black night of death, defeated death, and brought Life and Immortality to Light. Here is the most important truth that has ever broken in upon our race. The redeeming God really realising His redemption within the limit of our human experience. He was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. In Jesus, God was crying out, "This is My Beloved Son, hear Him."

In conclusion, there are two glorious truths inviting our ready response. The first is that however sharp the thorns may be for many of us there is One who understands them. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. To Him, when loneliness and grief and darkness overtake us, we can turn for light and aid. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, He will be there.

"Is there diadem, as Monarch,
That His brow adorns?
'Yea, a crown, in very surety,
But of thorns.'

"If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?
'Not till earth and not till heaven,
Pass away!'"

Second, here is the Evangel of Good News. Dora Greenwell depicts in one of her poems a Durham pitman confessing to his wife what it is that had changed him. He had been a drunkard and lived a dissolute life. His wife could not make out what had altered him and he answers in his own way.

"I have got a word like a sword in my heart that has pierced
it through and through,
When a message comes to a man from heaven, he needn't
ask if it's true,
There is none on earth could frame such a tale, for strange
as the tale may be,
Jesus, my Saviour, that Thou should'st die for a man like
me.

It was for me that Jesus died. Me and a world of men.
Just as sinful, just as slow to give back His love again.
He didn't wait till I came to Him, He loved me at my worst.
He needn't ever have died for me if I could have loved
Him first."

He first loved, and we must love Him too.

Chapter XIII

THE THRESHOLD OF THE KINGDOM

By

D. P. THOMSON, M.A.

INTRODUCTION

The message reproduced here has been given on many occasions, and the writer has had the joy of knowing of not a few who, through its instrumentality have been led to personal faith in Christ. Sometimes it has formed one of a series of addresses in the course of an evangelistic campaign, and in such cases it has generally been delivered about half-way through the mission. At other times it has been given as a single address, infrequently at a Sunday evening service. It has been found equally suitable for either purpose.

The reader need hardly be told that this message is addressed to a particular constituency, and is specialised accordingly alike in form and in type of appeal. It is not sufficient to say that it is an address to young men and women, for there are in the average audience or congregation many different types of young men and women, each with its own distinctive needs and problems, and all alike calling for special treatment. These are susceptible to different lines of approach, and will be found to respond best to different types of appeal.

This particular message is addressed to that

very large class of young men and women who have been reared in Christian homes, have subscribed in general to the truth of the Christian religion and have availed themselves—in greater or less degree—of the opportunities for worship, study and service afforded by the Christian Church, but have never come to the point of definite, personal surrender to Jesus Christ, as Saviour, Master and Friend.

It is the writer's experience that no class is so consistently represented in the average congregation and mission audience, and that none will respond more readily or give finer evidence of a vital and transforming experience. It is from this class that the Church can most easily recruit the men and women she so badly needs to-day for leadership in the onward march of the Kingdom of God.

This particular address deals primarily with the Kingdom of God, partly because that great conception so dominates the teaching of Christ, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, and partly because the Gospel of the Kingdom lends itself most readily to the type of appeal suited to the constituency in view. No attempt is made to expound the idea of the Kingdom of God, the address being concerned not with the Kingdom itself but with those who occupy a position of very great hopefulness in relation to it, and of very great danger to themselves if they fail to improve in it. It is the speaker's aim to show how greatly that one step of faith and decision is needed, and to what splendid issues it will lead if taken.

Throughout this address all the background of Christian thought and training of those to whom

the message is primarily delivered, is presupposed. The appeal is based on what only needs to be made explicit to receive immediate assent. The logical implication of such assent is moral decision, and it is for a decision that will involve the surrender of the whole personality to Christ that the appeal is made. Later, in personal conversation and in subsequent meetings, opportunity may be taken to deal with the implications of that decision, as affecting home life, vocation, recreation, friendship, etc.

It remains to be added that an attempt has been made to preserve as far as possible the form of spoken address, despite the inevitable literary roughness and seeming lack of proportion, and that because the present volume seems to demand it. The writer is very conscious, however, of the fact that the actual audience addressed invariably creates its own atmosphere and draws from the preacher much that is quite unpremeditated and that is not readily recalled when one sits down with pen and paper at the desk. To that extent such an address as this will always suffer unless taken down by a stenographer.

THE THRESHOLD OF THE KINGDOM

"Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."—Mark xii. 34.

It was near the end of the Master's life when this young man came to Jesus. Men were always coming to Jesus. There was something about Him that never failed to attract—a magnetic charm of personality that even His enemies felt.

Men came to Jesus from widely different motives. Some were seeking healing of mind or body. Others were drawn by mere idle curiosity or speculation. Not a few came really hungry for that revelation of truth and that baptism of power they believed He alone could give them. There were men in that crowd whose disinterested passion for the coming of the long-promised Kingdom had led them out to the fields and lanes of Galilee to sit at the feet of the new prophet. There were others whose narrow fanatical bigotry was such that no Galilean peasant aspiring to Messianic honours could hope to escape the storm of their indignation. It was a strangely mixed company that sat at the feet of the Master, that stood to listen as he spoke, or to watch Him perform some miracle of healing.

Probably it is true to say that no man in that crowd was really actuated solely by a single motive. What man is if we are to believe the psychologists? Certainly so far as the subject of our study is concerned we have here the revelation of a complex by no means uncommon. This man had his ideals and they found convincing expression in the way He addressed the Master. And he had his failings, for surely the very fact that he was there as the Pharisee's dupe is token enough of that. But as I stand by and watch him conversing with Jesus, as I mark his eager look and warm-hearted appreciation of the words of Christ, as I listen to the gracious rejoinder made by the Master, I can't help feeling that whatever there may have been in him of duplicity or self-deceit, there was more—far more—of a genuine desire for truth and a real heart-hunger for God. The

words of Jesus seem to make that clear beyond doubt.

Jesus listened to that young man's question—listened with the same keen sympathy with which He will listen to yours—listened because He would be the last to stifle any man's questioning or bid him silence the voice of enquiry even though it spoke with the accents of doubt—and then He answered. I like the answer of Jesus, but I like even better that young man's frank and generous response. It cost him something to say what he did and I can't help admiring him for it. The Pharisees didn't like it, and the men who were using him as their dupe tried to hide the fury that burned in their hearts. But Jesus understood. He realised what it cost. He was quick to lay hold of what it implied. His gaze had been fixed on that young man's face. His eyes had been reading that young man's soul. You know the way Jesus Christ looks at men? You feel you simply can't hide anything from Him—and you realise with a start that as a matter of fact you really don't want to! Then Jesus spoke—and the words were those of our text to-night—"Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

The Kingdom of God! How often do we catch that phrase on the lips of Christ! He is always talking about the Kingdom—inviting men to claim its citizenship, to share its privileges, to shoulder its obligations. Now He is describing its lowly origin—now picturing its silent but steady growth—now depicting its inevitable and ultimate triumph. It was for the Kingdom of God He lived. It was for the Kingdom of God He died. It is for the realisation of that Kingdom that all the re-

deeming energies of His risen life are being given so freely to-day.

Now what do we mean by the Kingdom of God? We use the words continually. We have grown familiar with their sound. In a vague undefined kind of way they have come to mean something to us. And yet how many of us have ever stopped to ask exactly what we mean by the Kingdom? How many have made any serious attempt to define it in terms of common speech? Some have. "I would paraphrase it," says Dr. Herbert Gray, "as 'A new social order based on God,' or 'A new type of civilisation centred in God.'" "The Kingdom of God," says Principal Clow, "is the rule and realm of God in the hearts and lives of men." As definitions these may be inadequate. As hints and suggestions towards a satisfactory definition they are invaluable. Taken together they may give us some idea of the range and scope of Christ's Kingdom. They will at least enable us to interpret the Master's meaning for our immediate purpose to-night. When the laws of God become the laws of man, when the love of God has become the universal rule of common life, when the Father's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven; when the nations of the world have claimed their place in the great family of the redeemed and entered into the full enjoyment of their inheritance in Christ—when they have learned to find in the discharge of every obligation and in the rendering of their fullest service that happiness and that harmony which are the ultimate goal of all human desire and endeavour—then the Kingdom of God will have come in power. That time is not yet. Indeed it sometimes seems

further off than ever. But there is a sense in which the Kingdom of God has already come. It is here in embryo at least—here in promise if not in power—here wherever you find men living in conscious fellowship with God—loving their fellows, striving to serve them, seeking to relate their time and their talents to the universal purpose of Christ, finding in Him the source of their strength and the secret of their joy.

Not far from the Kingdom. Then some men are far from the Kingdom! Yes, there are men and women in this city of ours to-night of whom it can be said without any want of charity that they are a long way from the Kingdom of God. They never name the name of Christ except in oath or blasphemy. They never kneel in prayer. They have no use at all for the Bible. Their minds and hearts are occupied wholly with other things. Their attention is given to other matters. Their pleasures are found in other and very different places. Sometimes they are actively hostile, more often they are quite indifferent, but in mind and sympathy and purpose they are far from the Kingdom of God.

And some men are in the Kingdom. That inference is equally clear. They have heard the voice of Christ and seen the vision of need. They have marked His teaching and given heed to His invitation. They have come in all their weakness and failure—and all their promise of better things; they have come with their hopes and their fears, their aspirations and their strivings, with their hunger for something better and bigger than they know—and in Christ they have found their real life—the life that is life indeed. The challenge

of His Kingdom, they have heard and accepted—its citizenship they have claimed, its rights and privileges they are now enjoying, its obligations they are endeavouring to discharge and to its service they are giving their lives. They have their faults—none know them better. They have a long way to go yet—full well they know it. But this at least may be said of them—they have given the lordship of their lives to Christ, they have found in prayer a new meaning and in the Bible a new book—they are finding the world a better and happier place to live in, and they are happier and better men themselves.

There is a third class, and it is of that third class I want to speak for a few minutes to-night.—These are the men and women of whom Jesus would say that they are "not far from the Kingdom of God." They are not in the Kingdom, and they themselves would be the first to admit it—but they are on its very border-land. The ideals of Christ attract them, the personality of Christ appeals to them, the message and challenge of Christ awaken a real response in their hearts. They are interested, even eager: always sympathetic, often expectant, frequently very hungry for something really vital. They pray, they read their Bibles, they go to meetings, they attend a Bible Class, join in acts of worship, and even seem to enjoy the company of Christian people! They would hate to be shut up in the company of the utterly ungodly and blasphemous. These are the men and women of whom Jesus would say, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God," and there are some of them here to-night. It is to you that I want to speak. I want you to look with me at this

young man and to ask what there was in him that led Jesus to class him so.

(1) *In the first place I think it was because he had been brought up in a good home and had lived a clean straightforward life.* The grosser forms of sin had never appealed to him—he simply hadn't allowed them to. The more materialistic conceptions of life had never gripped him—he had seen their shallowness only too clearly. He was honest and upright, agreeable and well educated, clean in mind and speech, and certainly no one could call him altogether selfish. True, no all-embracing purpose had gripped him, no great master passion had swayed him, but you couldn't help liking him when you got to know him—for the man he was and for the man you felt he had it in him to be. And isn't that true of some of us?

It is just because you have been brought up in a good home—just because a healthy interest has kept you from some of the things that have brought other men and women down—just because you have never allowed the grosser forms of sin to attract you or the cheap materialistic conceptions of life to grip you—just because you have lived a decent, clean, straightforward life—that Christ is saying to you to-night—"Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

(2) *And there was a second reason—that young man had given religion a place in his life.* He went to the synagogue, he attended the Passover, he read the law and did his best to keep it, he attended to the duties of religious observance—and Christ recognised the value of that. He knew that true inclination and spiritual susceptibility may well be developed by the diligent use of what

our fathers used to call the means of grace. And you? You read your Bible—from time to time at least. You say your prayers—not always perhaps, but you do pray. You go to church. You attend a Bible Class. Perhaps you are a member of the church and sit down at the Lord's Table. You haven't found Christ yet and you know it. You have never given Him His rightful place in your heart. But you give religion a place in your life, and just because of that He is saying to you now, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

(3) *There was a third reason—that young man had begun to think seriously about the biggest things in life.* He was facing its problems. He was trying to solve its enigmas. He was grappling with the biggest question of all—he was seeking the Highest Good. Am I not speaking to-night to some one of whom the same can be said? You have begun to think about the biggest things in life—you are trying to solve its problems—the problem of free-will, the problem of pain, the problem of death, the problem of destiny, the practical problems of life itself, the problem of trying to relate the teaching of Jesus to the terrible complexity of modern conditions. You haven't solved them. You don't seem to be getting any nearer a solution. You only seem to be getting more hopelessly involved every day. Your people think you are imbibing strange notions—they aren't afraid to say that you are getting off the rails! They know—and you know—that you are drifting away from the old landmarks. You can't repeat the old shibboleths. You can't subscribe to the old creeds. You can't look at life as an older generation

looked at it. Somehow everything is different. My friend, I don't care where your thinking has taken you. I am not concerned where it is leading you. What I want to say is this—if you are really grappling with the biggest things in life, if you are really seeking the truth, and are ready to act on it when you find it, then I believe Jesus Christ would have me tell you to-night, that you are "not far from the Kingdom of God."

(4) *That young man was convinced in his own mind that Christ was right—and he had the courage to say so.* And so are you! You know that His teaching is reasonable. You know that His message is true. You know that when He says that life without Him isn't worth calling life at all He is right. You know that you need Him, and that He can make all the difference to you. It takes more than intellect to make a man a Christian, but when you get to the point of admitting in your heart that Christ is right—and of sharing that conviction with others—then you are "not far from the Kingdom of God."

(5) *And then, lastly, I think I am right in saying that that young man was deeply moved by the appeal of Jesus.* I am sorry for the man who isn't. I pity with all my heart the man who can come face to face with Jesus Christ, who can look into those eyes of understanding love, who can listen to those words of power, who can stand beneath that Cross, who can hear the appeal of Christ—and not be moved to the very depths of his being. You have been so moved by the appeal of Christ—as you stood before some great masterpiece of art—as you heard some great oratorio—as you read one of these marvellous reinterpre-

tations of Jesus, so many of which have appeared these last few years—as you dipped into the Gospel story again—and you are deeply moved to-night as you hear the appeal of Christ once more in the words to which you are listening now. And just because of that, Jesus Christ is saying to you—as He lays His hand on your shoulder and looks into your eyes to-night: *"Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."*

But my friend, that isn't enough. I catch a note of warning in Jesus' voice. Don't misunderstand me—I must say it—*it is a dangerous thing to be "not far from the Kingdom of God."* Your very nearness may lull you into a sense of false security. Just because you have been brought up in a good home, and under the shadow of a Christian Church, just because you have lived a decent, clean, straightforward life, just because you are really seeking the truth you may think it's all right—and it isn't. It is very far from being all right. You may be near the Kingdom but you are not in it. You may be on its very threshold to-night, but you are not inside.

What do I mean by that? You are not in because you have never personally and definitely accepted the invitation of Jesus Christ and given Him the lordship of your life. You have given Him a place in your thoughts, you have given Him a place in your life, but you have never given Him *yourself*—all you are and have, and all you may become, your gifts and talents, your powers and possibilities. You believe in the power of Christ to set men free—to enable them to realise their best—but you have never made that power your own by one definite act of faith. You believe

in the forgiveness of sins, but you have never come to claim that forgiveness for yourself. You realise that Christ is crying to-night for volunteers—for men and women who will give themselves to the great enterprise of His Kingdom—and you have not yet responded to that call.

Why not come into the Kingdom to-night? Do you want a job big enough to engage all your energies? Do you want a provision generous enough to supply all your need? Do you want an adventure great enough to demand all your courage? Do you want a dynamic powerful enough to transform your life? Do you want a Leader worthy of all your loyalty and all your love? Then take Jesus Christ as your Saviour to-night.

Bring Him your life with all its unrealised possibilities—with all its past failures and shortcomings and defects—and lay it down at His feet. Bring Him your powers of mind and body, your discovered and developed talents. He needs them all, and He alone is worthy of them. Give Him His chance to make you the kind of man or woman you have it in you to be. And make up your mind that the kind of citizenship you are going to begin to-night will be real and vital—that you are going to give Him your best all the time and all the way.

You tell me you are not clear? You don't understand? There are things in the Bible that puzzle you? You have intellectual difficulties that are not yet cleared away? My friend, I know you have. So have I! There are hundreds of things that I don't understand. But there is one thing I do know and it is this—that I need Jesus Christ,

and that He alone can make me the man I want to be. And you know it too!

When you go into the city to one of these great seven-storey buildings—what do you do? You see a lift—you want to go up to the top flat. Do you say to yourself—"I don't understand the principles of hydraulics or electricity and I'm not going up till I do. I am not quite clear how this lift works and I won't use it till I am! You know it has taken other people up and you know it will take you up. In you get—and up you go! I only ask you to do the same to-night in the biggest things of life as you do in the everyday things, to be as fair with Jesus Christ as you are with the man who runs the lift. You know what He has done, and you know what He can do for you. Then give Him your life to-night. Tell Him you don't understand but that you are willing to trust Him. Come to Him just as you are.—*Let us pray.*

Chapter XIV

THE NATURALNESS OF RELIGION

By

J. J. VIRGO

INTRODUCTION

My messages, of which the following is a type, are delivered to audiences of men gathered by the Young Men's Christian Association in:—

(1) The halls of the local building.
(2) Theatres and cinemas.
(3) Industrial centres in the open air.
(4) Territorial Training College.
(5) Brotherhoods.

The circumstances under which the message is given vary considerably. In some instances a ten days' mission is arranged, in others a long week-end, and in Territorial camps two or three consecutive nights are given in each centre.

I invariably ask for a verdict, but do not necessarily seek outward demonstration. A season for silent prayer following the address is suggested as an opportunity to make a personal decision of faith in Christ, to resolve to enlist in His service, to count the days that are to follow as ill-spent that have not had in them some definite effort to bring gladness and cheer to the heart of another.

During an extended tour in Wales recently, I

pleaded for a recognition of the social implications of the Gospel, and issued a Pledge Card which committed the person signing it to Christian service for the betterment of the community. An effort was made to follow this up by Group Meetings of the signatories, and within the year I am revisiting the centres for the expressed purpose of meeting again those who voluntarily took their stand.

The address which follows, and which in delivery was more fully elaborated, is one of a series of ten on "Christian Citizenship," and was the result of a suggestion as to the impracticability of mere faith in facing up to the varied circumstances of life which, after all, is a warfare. My object was to show that following the exercise of faith, resistance, restraint and persistence in service were its natural complement.

It must be remembered that the audience was composed of young men representing both the thoughtful and the thoughtless section of the community, and one had to endeavour to strike a line that would, as far as possible, meet the needs of each class gathered under the same roof.

I regard it as a pleasing indication that the appeal made on the basis of "service to be rendered" finds a greater response than some messages I have heard which savour more of a life insurance appeal. The young fellows who are thinking about religion to-day are not, I believe, looking for the kind which provides "flowery beds of ease," or "singing themselves away to everlasting bliss." The average man wants to put up a fight. What I have been aiming for is

that he shall commence with the Cross as a starting point for the development of the highest character, and, from the jump, begin to show his faith by his works.

THE NATURALNESS OF RELIGION

It is late in the day to remind you that every nation and tribe under heaven has in some respect, though differently stated, a belief in a Supreme Being, and a final happy solution of all life's troubles in a place, variously described, for those who have exercised faith. It would appear, therefore, that religion should have a material place in the scheme of things affecting all mankind, and not be a subject to be discussed with bated breath, but rather unaffectedly avowed. Without attempting to discuss the religions of the world (an impossibility in a short address, and certainly beyond my powers), I would limit myself to the Christian religion, of which Jesus is the great exponent, and say at once that, far from being the extraordinary possession of men, it should be a natural corollary of his existence. In some respects it is a complexity, but need not therefore be a perplexity. Indeed, it is its simplicity that is at once an attraction and a bar to its acceptance. It is associated not with the intellectual alone, but with the will and the practical life. The observance of sacraments, rites and ceremonies, appeal or repel according to temperament, but there is a general recognition that true religion is the complete response of man's whole nature to the Unseen, the Infinite, the Eternal, resulting in obedience to Divine Law,

and finding its fullest joy in the true service of God and of man.

St. James has tersely affirmed that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. Surely there is nothing unnatural here, save to the selfish and self-satisfied soul, who recognises no interdependence, and whose poor spirit forbids his rising above the eat, drink and be merry attitude. There are those who regard it as unnatural and unreasonable because they attack the problem by regarding it as a matter for the head. But, as has been well said, it is a matter of the spiritual aptitudes, and is to regulate life. Jesus did not bring to the world a new code of rules, certainly, but He did lay down principles and set up standards by which those who have accepted Him can order their doings and help towards the betterment of the world. It should be the most natural thing for men to desire to gladden, to suffuse light, to sweeten, to purify, and to be fruitful in all good graces, and these are surely the things suggested by such metaphors as "Light," "Salt," "Branches of the Vine." The Christian religion has been given to the world by an acknowledged perfect man. Its principles are commended by the manliest of men, by great scholars, by noble and profound thinkers. Religion has been the main-spring in the life of men who have stamped their character upon the world. Obviously no other has affected the human race as has Jesus, and His religion has survived its base betrayals, and its persistence shows its tremendous recuperative power.

And Why? Because "Christ *Himself* is the secret of the perennial vitality of His religion." True, many of its professors are inconsistent, but the very charge is an acknowledgment of its purity and genuineness. It is a striking testimony to the might of spiritual forces when men complain of the ineffectiveness of inconstant Christians, for it is no evidence of defect in the religion itself, but, on the contrary, a tribute to it. Men do not imitate the base and worthless.

The Christian religion appeals to me for four reasons, which I give under alliterative heads. It renews man's nature; it gives him resisting force; it supplies him with restraining grace; and it furnishes him with replenishing influence. The irreligious character is a defective character, for goodness is not a negative quality: it is the dominion of the soul over vicious forces. Free-will implies the possibility of double action. If a man had been made incapable of sinning, he would have been a thing and not a man. The power he possesses to do right is the same power used in the exercise of doing wrong. The tendency to wrong in an unregenerate state becomes diverted towards right when a man is *renewed* by the exercise of his will in the power of the Spirit of the Great Master of men.

Political economy and natural philosophy cannot remake man, for they do not touch the vital fact of an image marred, of a will weakened, of an affection denied, of a soul soiled, of a burden too heavy to be borne. To such, other religions will give freely of counsel and guidance for the planning of life, but the Founder of the Christian

religion Himself stooped to the lowest depths to raise men to the greatest heights.

What more natural, then, than that there should be given a power of *resistance* against the evil forces around? Henceforth, he is not a mere tool of circumstance. He has learned that any fool can do wrong, and that he is in possession of a new power, a new life in Christ, a proved armour that furnishes him with the ability not to yield to evil forces. Another element has entered into his manhood. He has a new impulse towards fighting, thwarting, baffling and disappointing the evil spirit that leads men astray. What more natural than for man, impelled by the good spirit of true religion, to set about righting wrongs in communities, when his own wrong tendencies have been set right? Surely a religion that produces this type has an appeal in it to every right-thinking citizen?

A great evangelist used to say, that "Character is what a man is in the dark." And who has not prayed: "Restrain in me the accursed thoughts which nature gives way to in repose." Hence the need for a religion which will control, check, curb, and restrict what are called natural tendencies. Habit becomes a mighty chain, and binds men as most know. The practice of the Christian religion is the natural *restraining* school for the development of character. A man hesitated to accept Christianity as a practical and natural aid to right living because of his habit of swearing, which he avowed no power could break. Finally yielding, he shortly afterwards met with an accident which ought, in the ordinary course, to have

resulted in producing a lurid effect on the atmosphere. Conscious of the new power which had suppressed his natural tendency, he rushed across to a nearby friend, declaring that a miracle had happened, for he had "fallen down the hay-loft and didn't swear." "But," he added, "a greater miracle happened when I found *I didn't want to swear.*"

But finally, I know nothing that will create a finer national soul and a righteous community conscience, than the Christian religion, which, in its natural outcome, exercises *replenishing* influence on community life. For the truly religious man is interested in and concerned for others. It is a sad commentary that whilst so many *profess* religion, so few give practical effect to its teaching on the lines of "who is my neighbour!" Churches lack workers, missions are poorly supported, and institutions are hampered, when, if the religion they represent received adequate recognition, efforts for the improvement of the race by means of legislative enactment, better environment and increased efficiency would be tremendously aided, because of the addition of an impelling spiritual force. It will be a sorry day for our Empire when there is a failure to recognise the value and naturalness of religion. The present conditions demand a clarion call by the Church of Jesus Christ to all communities to return to the simple religion which made our fathers great. And on the part of all there is need to recognise that in Christ we have the solution of all life's problems, and that the most natural thing is to accept His standards, for these

apply to every phase of existence, whether affecting poverty, riches, the family, marriage, human society, politics, or international friendship.

With the utmost faith in the Gospel, I appeal to each one of my hearers to make a definite choice of Jesus Christ as a *personal* Saviour. We owe it to Him to recognise His obvious claims upon our allegiance, and I know of no other who can effectually meet the needs of the soul. All of us stand in need of forgiveness; none is able of himself to satisfy the claims of the law. His grace alone is sufficient.

We owe this choice to His Church, for the opportunities it offers will aid in the development of our own life and character; we owe it to the community of which we form a part, because of the influence that we can exert in the interests of public betterment; we owe it to the world at large, for every additional faithful response to the claims of the Gospel at home makes easier the effective presentation of the message to those without our privileges; we owe it to ourselves, "for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Therefore, I urge very strongly the necessity for making a decision, of giving a verdict. This is the course which is invariably taken in the ordinary matters of life—a political campaign will find you exercising your right to choose for whom you will vote; a business career is offered and a decision regarding it has to be made; the moment will come when your mind will need to be made up on the all-important question of the choice of a wife. In fact you are all the time

making decisions, choosing, giving expression to your choice.

I submit again that the irreligious character is essentially a defective character, and the claims of religion are such as to demand from you settled convictions, strong faith, courage to take a stand, and determination to live a life consistent with all that is highest and best.

I therefore would in closing say once more, take your stand for Christ and religion; such an action will give new purpose to life, will add fresh beauty to life, will stop the waste in your life, and will prevent drifting into indifference as to God's claims upon that life.

Chapter XV

THE GREAT REFUSAL

By

C. ENSOR WALTERS

INTRODUCTION

The following sermon is the kind of message I give in my ordinary ministry. All my preaching —in open air, mission hall or church—centres in Christ.

The preaching of Christ is ever fresh and ever powerful. The modern mind gropes after Christ, and He alone satisfies. The New Testament is a living Book—with a message for every age.

THE GREAT REFUSAL

"But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful."—St. Matthew xix. 22.

"He went away sorrowful." Here is a tragic ending to one of the most remarkable interviews in all history. One who came to Christ to learn from Him the way of life—the secret of happiness—went away sorrowful.

Let me paint in word picture the incident of my text. Jesus had just blessed the little children. With infinite compassion and wonderful pity He had called the little children unto Himself. "Suffer the little children and forbid them

not to come unto me; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." In that word He manifested His interest in the weak, the helpless, and the dependent. But His religion was not alone to aid the weak, it sought to inspire the strong. And it is significant that after blessing little children, Our Lord should have manifested His interest in strong, active and vigorous life.

The time of the interview was at a critical period in the ministry of Jesus. He was at the parting of the ways. Until then He had been popular. The people had compassed Him with love and admiration; the North had gone after Him—would have taken Him by force and made Him King. But now all was changing. He had declared to His astonished disciples that He "must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed . . ." He had deliberately turned His face to Jerusalem and the Cross. As He is commencing that journey a young Ruler—rich, and influential, one who had won a high place in the councils of his nation, and, I imagine, a man of charm, distinction and intellectual power came running unto Him, falling down before Him, and kneeling in the dust, he asked, "Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

I want you to notice the young man's splendid courage. He was not like Nicodemus, cautious and even timid, coming to Jesus by night. He was not like others who came with plausible but subtle questions seeking to entrap Jesus. He was brave, honest and sincere. He knew that already Jesus was regarded with suspicion, and

was an outlaw in the mind of many religionists, but in spite of this, he came in broad, open daylight, in the eyes of all who cared to observe him, falling on his knees, with homage and reverence seeking from Jesus the way of Life.

Yet it is strange that he should have come thus! Notice, he was no beggar, who had not where to lay his head, no palsied wretch beseeching healing, no guilty criminal longing for peace—he was a gentleman, honest, upright, true! A moral man—religious, earnest and courageous. By his questions he was evidently a man of thought and keen intellect. Why should he come to Jesus? Ah! he had discovered what many of us have discovered, what all seeking souls learn sooner or later—that morality, culture, education, position, do not answer the questions of the soul, and do not reveal the way of life or the secret of happiness. This man sought the truth—evidently he was immensely impressed by Jesus. He had listened to His incomparable teaching. I picture him at the edge of the crowd whilst Jesus was teaching. Gradually there dawned upon him the conviction that Jesus was a Teacher come from God; that He had the secret of life—the key to happiness. That He was able to answer the questions of the heart, to satisfy the yearnings of the soul. Therefore he came to Jesus, kneeling before Him in lowly homage.

I shall always honour the rich young Ruler. He is amongst the pioneers of those men of intellect and position who acknowledge the supremacy of Jesus. You young men and women listening to me hear sneers from the superficial and ignorant concerning Christianity. Remember Jesus

won the homage of this young gifted ruler; of Nicodemus, of St. John and of St. Paul, and that in all the ages since men of intellect have rendered Him homage. Dr. Geikie, in his *Life of Christ*, has written of the long line of mighty men who have paid their tribute to Jesus—Shakespeare, Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton and Milton. "I esteem the Gospels," says Goethe, "to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendour of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, of so divine a kind as only the Divine could ever have manifested upon earth." "How petty are the books of the philosophers with all their pomp," says Rousseau, "compared with the Gospels!" "Jesus of Nazareth our divinest symbol!" exclaims Thomas Carlyle. Not long before he died Gladstone declared, "I am asked what a man should chiefly look to in his progress through life, as to the power which is to sustain him under trials and enable him manfully to confront his afflictions. I must point to something which in a well-known hymn is called 'the old, old story,' and taught with an old, old teaching, which is the best gift ever given to mankind. The older I grow the more confirmed I am in the belief that Jesus Christ is the only hope of humanity."

Yet, as this splendid young Ruler, with his keen intellect and transparent honesty, kneels before Him, Jesus is in no way flattered. Indeed, on the surface, His reception seems almost cool and critical. St. Mark's record gives perhaps the clearest record of the penetrating words and questions of the Master. "Good Master," cries the Ruler, "what shall I do that I may inherit

eternal life?" And Jesus said unto him, "Why callest thou Me good? None is good save One, even God." What did Jesus mean? These are hard sayings and I cannot venture their complete explanation. But if you put together the records of the interview in the three Gospels—St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke—I think you get the real meaning. "Why," in effect said Jesus, "do you use as a mere title of courtesy the word 'good' . . . goodness is the highest attribute of God . . . You ask me the way of life—you know the Commandments: 'Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honour thy father and mother.'" "Master," quickly answered the Ruler, "all these things have I observed from my youth. What lack I yet?" It was as if he said, "Lord, I have been upright, moral, straight, but there is something wrong with me. I want peace, I want to know the way of life, the secret of real happiness—what lack I yet?" St. Mark in his record of the interview has a lovely touch, "Jesus looking upon him, loved him" . . . loved his courage, his sincerity, his earnestness, and his high purpose. I am glad to learn from the New Testament that Jesus loved poor broken sinners, guilty wretches, helpless castaways, I am also glad to know that He loved a man like this! If you forget all else in my address remember these words, "Jesus looking upon him, loved him!" And that may change *your* life and thought and action!

Now comes the paradox—because Jesus loved this man He proceeded to hurt him. He who loves often hurts those whom He loves. Some

people have a strange idea of love—as a weak sentiment, a milk-and-water emotion. They libel love and essentially the Love of God. I urge that love often hurts. I remember being in Whitehall in the fateful August of 1914 and saw a never-to-be-forgotten sight. Crowds of men seeking to enter the War Office to enlist—rich, poor, cultured and ignorant men—not conscripts, volunteers. The ideals that shone in the early days of the war led to disillusionment and disappointment. But then these ideals were lofty and noble. Why were these men crowding to the War Office? Behind those doors there were no bags of gold nor crowns of glory, but a way to poison gas, liquid fire, and hell let loose. Yet these men went. Why? They loved their country and their love was to maim, blind and kill them! That's what love means. A mother loves her child and because of that when the great surgeon says, "Only the knife may save the child," she will let the surgeon hurt her dear one that the life so precious may be saved! That is love.

The love of some is a mockery. Here are parents who profess love for their children, yet are too cowardly, or too lazy, to reprove their children or punish them. Many a boy or girl lives to curse the memory of parents who were too weak, too sentimental to reprove them and pull them up when dangers beset their pathway. True love hurts.

Jesus hurt the Ruler: "One thing thou lackest; go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and, come, follow me." It was as if Jesus said, "Ruler, you want to know the way of life, follow

me. I go to Jerusalem, to a Cross, join my company and you shall have the fulfilment of your desire . . . follow Me!"

Do you not see what was wrong with the Ruler? It was not simply that he was rich. He wanted the best of both worlds. He had an eager desire for the right, but he loved the present world—its ease and luxury . . . he was quite willing to follow Christ's teaching if he could still live the old life, keep his old friends, walk the "primrose path." And this was impossible. He could not live the luxurious life of the world and at the same time follow the Galilean. Jesus must have all or nothing. Hence, "When the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions."

What a tragic mistake. Do you remember Watts' great picture of the Ruler, "He had great possessions." The haunting look on his face as he turned from Jesus—the great refusal.

Oh, Ruler, why did you turn away? You might have been one of the greatest figures in history! You might have stood by Jesus at His trial! You might have comforted the Holy Mother at the foot of the Cross! You might have been a preacher on the Day of Pentecost! You might have been greater even than St. Paul! Men, women and children might bless your memory. You missed your opportunity. You are forgotten. No one knows your name; you only live as the man who might have been; as the man who was loved by Jesus and yet who turned away from Him. Ah, men and women, listening to me now—be warned by this Ruler . . . see to it lest you "go away sorrowful!"

The turning away of the young Ruler stands out as a warning and a perpetual reminder of these truths: (1) Jesus, and Jesus only, reveals the way of life and the secret of happiness; (2) He reveals this on one condition:—that of Full Surrender to Him and obedience to His will; (3) Such Full Surrender and obedience brings happiness, peace, and the consciousness of life eternal!

(1) Jesus, and Jesus only, reveals the way of life and the secret of happiness. And He does this because in His light we see God, and the way to God and the life which is eternal. The Ruler expressed the unrest of the human soul, the yearning for God, "Oh, that we may know where we might find Him." Jesus answers the cry. He leads the sons of men by the hand into the presence of the infinite and He says: "When ye pray, say our Father." In His light we see the life eternal. He banished the blackness of death, and He revealed the never-ending life, "I am the resurrection, and the life!" He said, "He that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

I remember in my mission work entering a slum dwelling in London. There, upon a filthy bed, a London costermonger was dying, and his mates were seated round drinking beer out of pots as they watched him. The scene was never to be forgotten. I stood by the bedside and the man moaned: "God! God! Who is God—where is God?" That ignorant man in a slum had the same heartache as the wealthy young Ruler. He wanted God, life, peace . . . Taking him by the

hand as I knelt at his side I said: "God is our Father." "Father?" he said. "Yes," I answered, "and He sent JESUS CHRIST His Son to tell us that"; then I looked towards the men who sat round the bed drinking and told them to put down their beer pots and kneel, saying after me, "Our Father." Like little children they prayed, "Our Father . . . Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen." Then I saw the poor coster was gasping—dying. I bent over him and said, "For Jesus' sake, say My Father." "My Father, for Jesus' sake," he gasped out and was dead. Poor London coster, born in a slum, surrounded by misery and vileness in all his life, even he yearned for God and was willing to learn from Jesus the only way.

I repeat, Jesus only reveals the way to happiness. There is no other way; that is why the Ruler "went away sorrowful." Men ever seek another way. Watch such in our day—they follow pleasure and the world, and all in vain. Again and again in my contact with men and young men I have found this.

Some years ago I was preaching in one of the Halls of the West London Mission. As I looked at my congregation, a young man's face—cynical and sad impressed me. I was determined to speak to him, and at the close of the service hastened to the door through which he would pass in leaving. As he passed through the door I shook him by the hand and told him I was glad to see him at the service. "I didn't come here to listen to you preaching," he somewhat rudely said, "I came in because it was raining." "Oh!" I said, "I do not

mind why you came." "If you knew the kind of fellow I am," he added, "you would kick me out of the hall." "No," I answered, "we do not usually dismiss our congregations in that fashion." His hardened look went; my humour had touched him. He came into my private room and told me a pitiable story. The son of wealthy parents, earnest Christians, he had come to London, determined above all else to enjoy himself—to find happiness. He had indulged in vice of the lowest kind. "Don't talk of Hell," he said, "I have been there." And he was only twenty-three years of age. Would to God that thousands of men and women fascinated by the glamour of the world could have seen him and felt the pathos as I did. He was a wreck of noble humanity. The next day I visited him. He was living in a slum dwelling; the only furniture in the room he occupied was a miserable bed and a small wooden box. After conversation he brought out of the box a Bible wrapped in white paper. "Mother gave me that," said he, "when I came to London." With penitence he knelt and confessed his sins to Jesus Christ. He submitted all his being to the Saviour. And in Christ he found peace and joy. "Warn men," he said before I left, "the world will give them nothing—that is the way of misery and heartache!"

(2) Jesus reveals the way, life, and the secret of happiness on one condition—full surrender to Him and obedience to His Will. We must keep back nothing. "One thing," may spoil all. The young Ruler's refusal to count the cost and yield all—sent him away sorrowful. Put yourself in the

Ruler's place; of him it is said, "He had great possessions," of us it may be said, "He had a jealous nature;" "he has lustful thoughts;" "he has an evil temper." That one thing robs us of happiness and peace. The watch I have in my pocket may be perfect in appearance—a gold case and jewelled fittings, but if the mainspring is broken it is useless. An orchestra may be wonderful, clever musicians and fine instruments—but one man "out of tune" spoils the music. One Judas may ruin the reputation of the Twelve, and betray the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Cast out the one evil thing.

> "The dearest idol I have known:
> Whate'er that idol be;
> Help me to tear it from its throne,
> And Worship only Thee."

(3) There follows the full surrender—happiness, peace and the consciousness of the Life Eternal! Here is another paradox—the apparently hard way is the Easy Way. The Ruler refused the hard way and "Went away sorrowful." If he had but accepted Christ and journeyed the way of the Cross, happiness and peace would have been his lot. It is ever thus in life. Study the selfish, the idle rich, the sensual, the pleasure seekers—their inevitable end—boredom, sorrow and disappointment. I often think of the lines of Byron—the brilliant man, who early in life lost his way:—

> "My days are in the Yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker and the grief
> Are mine alone."

Contrast with this the happiness of those who surrender all for Christ. I was once the Chaplain of a "Home of Peace for the Dying." I have watched the nurses in their loving care for broken cancer and consumptive patients, and have witnessed their self-sacrifice. Their faces were a benediction, their joy an inspiration—they had learnt the way of the Cross is the way of peace. I say to you, my hearers, thirsting as you are for happiness and peace—yet holding on to the world —you will never find what you desire, until by surrendering all to Christ you discover the only way.

Finally, I say, "Jesus looking" on you—loves you! Yes—He loves you—loves you in spite of yourself, your ignorance, your foolishness and your waywardness. To you He says, "Follow Me." To follow Him will mean sacrifice, self-denial and faith; but it will also mean happiness, peace and the knowledge of life eternal. Refuse, and like the young Ruler, you will go "away sorrowful," accept and you shall have life and have it "more abundantly."

THE END

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